ARGOSY

DECEMBER 1960

Price in SOUTH AFRICA
AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND
TWO SHILLINGS
AND SIXPENCE

TEN NEW STORIES

NANCY MITFORD

STUART CLOETE

GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

DAVID CAUTE

VICTOR FRANCIS

Viscount
MONTGOMERY OF ALAMEIN K.G.

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ARGOSY

A Fleetway magazine

Vol. XXI No. 12 **DECEMBER 1960**

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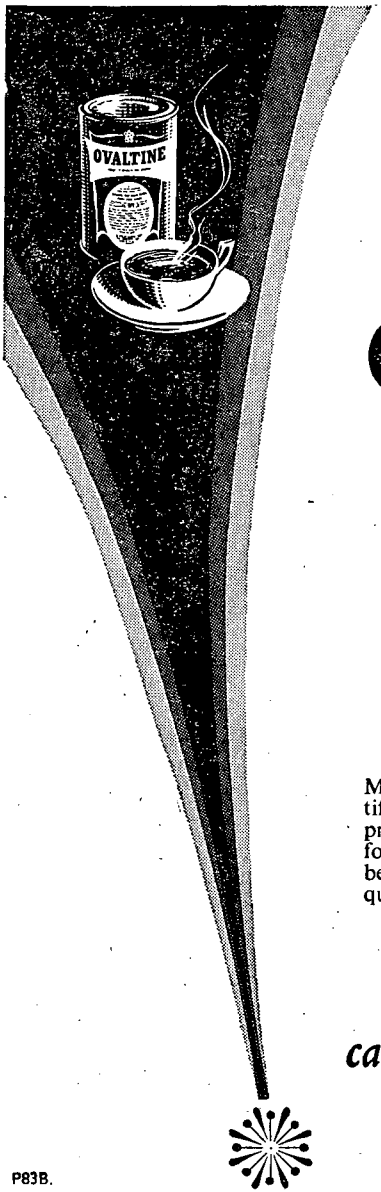

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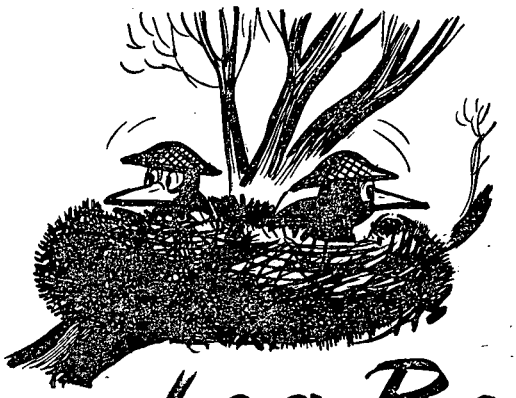

Log Book

RECENTLY we were sent a publication by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries entitled War Against the Weaver Bird. Before we had so much as read the first line, the title of this interesting document had dived right into our subconscious, surfaced again, and slipped us irresistibly into the rhythm of the Bluetail Fly:

When I was young I used to wait
And listen to the news at half-past eight
And the wildest thing I ever heard
Was the War against the Weaver Bird.
Jimmy crack corn . . .

But stay, let us see what this is all about.

The weaver bird (or Quelea-Quelea, if we are being formal) is a pretty little feathered friend with red beak, black collar, and beige body. He lives in Africa, weaving his tiny nest in bush and swamp, and consuming a moderate ration of two or three ounces of grain a day. He has no natural enemies, and a remarkable resistance to illness. He sounds, in fact, a model citizen, frugal, peaceful, and industrious.

The only disadvantage about weaver birds is that there are so many of them. A recent battue in Tanganyika accounted for more than three million of the little dears; during the nesting season it is common to find anything up to 1,000 of them in each tree, weaving, gossiping, and swopping babysitting rosters.

Weaver birds, besides being healthy and cheerful, have strong nerves and a lot of luck. In Senegal the local chiefs try to scare

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them off by turning out whole villages to beat on drums, boxes, and tins, but the birds love this; they have set up jazz clubs and skiffle groups to listen, and clap their wings with approval as they sit munching their sorghum.

In Kenya the government tried getting rid of the birds with explosions, and in the Cameroons, where the farmers find weaver birds no lark, they use flame-throwers; but both these remedies have the disadvantage of setting fire to a lot of things besides weaver birds; indeed the w.b.'s mostly just fly away.

Poisoned bait had similar drawbacks and was soon abandoned; air spraying with parathion brought its own troubles. Attempts at biological control only served to prove that an ounce of millet a day keeps the fowl pest at bay, so far as weaver birds are concerned.

In the end the whole business, like so many other lost causes, has been turned over to the United Nations.

Sprinkle your poisons in the air
Scatter your bombs, and we don't care
Weaver's here for his two-ounce share
And we've a right to stay . . .

And after all, we can't help sympathising with the weaver birds, so peaceful in their habits, so moderate in their demands; and finding something encouraging for the future of the human race about this gay persistence in the face of difficulties.

It reminds us that there are still plenty of affairs in the world that go on all the time, functioning cheerfully and adequately in spite of nuclear weapons and the weather: Argosy, vitamins, the law of gravity, and Greenwich Mean Time, to name only a few.

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Nancy Mitford, whom most people think of as one of the Hons, inventor of U and non-U, has written another book taking up the fortunes of the Radlett family in Paris, and we're delighted to present part of it this month. Nancy Mitford is herself an adopted native of Paris, which suits her lively wit and taste in clothes better than Anglo-Saxony. Her views are highly individual, not to say downright, and she once commented on another august contributor to this issue of Argosy: "I approve very warmly of people who speak out. Look at Montgomery. He says what he thinks . . . He never mistakes forthright speaking for making a fuss about nothing in particular."

Readers may like to be reminded about the Cinque Ports, mentioned by **Lord Montgomery** (on page 40) in his rousing and heart-warming toast to their Lord Warden, Sir Winston Churchill. They are Hastings, Romney, Hythe, Dover, and Sandwich, plus the Ancient Towns of Rye and Winchelsea, whose duty, until the reign of Henry VII, was to furnish ships and men for the King's service.

Old friends with new stories in Argosy this month are **Geoffrey Household** with a puma, **Stuart Cloete**'s fresh and moving *Throw Your Heart Over*—a story outside his usual vein but one which we are sure will appeal to Argosy readers—and a new South African tale from **Jack Cope.**

In this issue we have also an Argosy "first" by newcomer **Noel Carrick,** a Melbourne journalist, who tells us he got the inspiration for *Diggers' Delight* when a bottle of Grappa was dropped into a bowl of punch.

JOHN SILVER

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The Informer

By

DAVID CAUTE

STEPPING FROM his hotel into the glittering afternoon, Stanton blinked a moment in the harsh glare and then hurried across the square towards the taxi rank. Small African children pursued him, clutching at his white shorts, uttering shrill cries, their feet grey with dust, begging for pennies. Irritably he shook them off with an oath, and then felt ashamed as their wide saucer eyes brimmed with disappointment. One forgot one's liberal principles so easily.

Finding the taxi drivers sleeping in the shade of their American limousines, caps pulled over their eyes, he recalled something about mad dogs and Englishmen and shook one of them roughly back to consciousness.

"How much to the airport?"

The young man staggered to his feet, rubbing his eyes in an aggrieved way, and spat in the monsoon ditch.

"Ten shillings, massah."

"I'll give you four."

The driver shrugged indifferently. "Eight shillings last offer."

Stanton decided to walk. A left-wing paper with a small circulation and few advertisements couldn't afford substantial expense accounts. He plodded out of the town towards the airport. After ten minutes, with his feet already blistered and the flesh raw and burnt on the back of his neck, he realised his mistake. Nobody with a white skin walked in this climate. He began to search for a taxi.

A yellow Dauphine detached itself from the stream of traffic and pulled in beside him. A handsome, chocolate-coloured woman was smiling slyly at him through the window.

"Want a lift," she drawled in good English, "or are you training for the next Olympics?"

He climbed in and felt the hot leather scorch his bare legs.

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It seems hard to believe that The Informer is only the second story in Argosy from David Caute. Its maturity, power, grip, and tension are such that although it comes somewhat outside the usual range of an Argosy story we had no hesitation in snapping it up.

We recommend it for a nonstop read—and look forward to more of his work.

Having accepted a Research Fellowship at Harvard, Caute is in America now; it will be exciting to see how his new environment stimulates this born story-teller. His second novel, Comrade Jacob, comes out early in 1961.

" Very good of you," he said curtly, annoyed by the derision in her large brown eyes. She thrust the gear into bottom, let out the clutch abruptly, and swung the car back into the middle of the road.

" A fellow journalist, I observe," she commented, eyeing his camera.

" Guilty. And you? " he asked, not caring, but obliged to make polite conversation.

" Oh, in a degraded sort of way. A hack gossip columnist for the local rag. Thea Colman's the name." Keeping her eyes on the traffic she extended her limp left hand to him, like some languid orchid.

He toyed with it awkwardly.

" Stanton," he said. " Ben Stanton of *The People's Daily*."

Her slim black eyebrows rose imperceptibly. " Ah, a Socialist. Very rare beasts out here, and none too welcome as I daresay you've gathered." Her voice bore the dark quality of rich tobacco, an intriguing mixture of varying strains basically African but with a hard English veneer.

" I gathered," he said.

Nearing the airport the traffic grew thicker, and she had to slow to walking pace. He found the time, the composure, and the inclination to look this woman over, from the shrewd, enigmatic features with their heavy, provocative lips down to the slender, tapering legs. Stanton found himself favourably impressed.

" As a matter of fact," she drawled, " although this is strictly off the record, you have my full sympathy, if that's any comfort to you. I mean Socialism and all that."

" Thank you."

" Perhaps you think women are dunces at politics? "

" I didn't say so."

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Large crowds of people in festive, flag-waving mood, their faces painted with white clay, had gathered outside the airport to witness the arrival of the new Governor. The police, Stanton noted, were out in force.

"They're expecting trouble," Thea remarked laconically, "and I daresay they'll get it."

"Trouble? What sort of trouble?"

She flung him a searching glance, a hard, intuitive feminine assessment, the corners of her heavy mouth curling slightly in derision. "How long have you been out here, Mr. Stanton?"

"A week."

"I might have guessed."

They drove through the airport gates, brandishing their press passes, and she swung the car into a parking space. Climbing out on to the molten tarmac, Stanton felt vaguely irritated by the patronising superiority of her manner. He had no wish to be treated like a new boy at school—yet somehow no inclination to leave her. She represented a challenge.

"There's a press lobby," she said. "It's cool and there's lemonade with straws. Can you bear my company?"

"But of course."

Standing by her side on the verandah, occasionally scanning the sky for the expected plane, Stanton found it hard to keep his eyes from her firm brown body, forcing its thin dress into mature curves. It came as a surprise to realise that he had scarcely spoken to a woman since his arrival in the colony. Suddenly, as the ice-cold squash slid down his throat, he was glad he hadn't taken a taxi . . .

From the airport gates Police Superintendent Collins scanned the bright azure sky towards the north. Towards Europe. At measured intervals he would turn deliberately and anxiously survey his policemen, strung out in a long file to hold back the crowd. Of course, he reflected, he needed more men, but that was an old story wrapped in red tape. The Rolls-Royce was in position, and with it the motor-cycle escort.

Collins' right hand monotonously clicked and unclicked the fastener of his revolver holster, a casual habit he had acquired during long years of colonial service.

A tiny speck of light gradually growing larger, the Comet slid gracefully out of the sky, gleaming in the sun like some great silver bird, its jets throwing a faint whine to those waiting on the ground. As she touched down on the central runway of the airport, her huge wheels sending up a flurry of dust, the dignitaries began to arrange themselves in order of precedence, to receive the new Governor.

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Collins could not resist a grunt of satisfaction. In recent months his lot had been an arduous one, with the colony rent by anti-British riots and demonstrations, mostly organised and engineered by the Pan African Congress. Collins had no time for extremist nationalists. Any form of fanaticism was alien to his nature. The British had done a good job and got precious little thanks for it. Now Sir Harry James, a young Governor with a reputation for progressive views and sound common sense, would represent a new policy, a desire for a solid working partnership with responsible, moderate Africans.

The gun salutes, military inspection, and handshaking completed, the Governor and his entourage climbed into open cars and the motor cavalcade began to move majestically out of the airport.

Sir Harry, dressed in white, his topee crowned with gleaming ostrich feathers, smiled cheerfully, raising a friendly hand in response to the cheers. But Superintendent Collins, driving in a police Land Rover just ahead of the Governor's car, his tanned face a passive mask, kept his sharp blue eyes glued to the throbbing crowd, his right hand twitching tensely at his revolver.

And when, amid the bedlam of shouting and waving flags and stamping feet, he observed a young African in a flowered shirt slip through the police cordon and run across the road towards the Governor's car, clutching a small black object, Collins never hesitated, his reflexes responding quite smoothly, his bullets pumping neat holes in the young nationalist, causing him to lose balance so that the bomb hurtled backwards, exploding in the crowd . . .

"Never," Thea said, leaning against the bar, "have I seen such a ghastly mess. Never. You'd better give me another gin, Ben."

Stanton ordered two more gins, offered her a cigarette, and was disturbed to find his hand still shaking. As a hardened newsman he considered himself immunised to the sight of suffering, but the frightful carnage and chaos created by the exploding bomb had made exceptional demands on his reserves.

As for Thea, her brittle cynicism had peeled off like a loose garment, revealing the highly-strung, sensitive woman beneath.

The sharing of this experience had smashed the barriers between them at a single stroke, a terrible short cut to mutual sympathy and understanding. Now they drank together, talking of their lives and work, of the colony, its future, and of the Pan African Congress whose handiwork they had just witnessed.

"Their aims are sound enough," said Stanton, tugging at his

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cigarette, " but this violence—this killing. I can't see it can do much good."

" You haven't been out here long enough, Ben. Desperate men, desperate means. This is their final resort. Believe me, there is no other way."

Sensing the passion and bitterness behind her words, on an impulse he took her long brown fingers in his own.

" I daresay you've had a lot to put up with, Thea."

For an instant her old hardness returned, a fierce rejection of self-pity. " Oh me! Maybe I'll sell you the copyright of my life story one day, but not just now. It just happens that this is the one white hotel in town where I'm admitted, so I mustn't complain, must I? "

He let her hand slip from his . . .

She rang two days later.

" Ben, the Governor's giving a reception for top people this evening, and I've fixed an invitation for you on the pretext that you're a top person, a terrible lie, I must confess."

" Good girl. But how? "

" Never mind how. Come at six-thirty. And wear a tie. Trousers too, preferably."

He was only ten minutes late. Stepping into the ornate Reception Chamber, into this world of brittle chatter and grotesque etiquette, he found the old bile of resentment rising within him, an irrational hatred of the colonial establishment and all that it stood for. A smartly uniformed African waiter with a poker face and bare feet thrust a glass into his hand as he searched desperately for Thea. Catching his eye through the crowd, she winked obscenely and threaded her way to his side like an elegant snake.

" I've come to hold your hand," she declared.

" The main problem in here," he grumbled, " is to breathe."

But even as he spoke an ageing white lady with a badly painted face confronted him and inquired boldly, " And what do *you* do? "

Thea had vanished.

Superintendent Collins was on his fourth whisky. Drink, he liked to think, affected him very little. Frankly, he didn't much care for these formal gatherings and was more at home on the parade ground, but he accepted their necessity as stimulators of administrative goodwill. He was impressed by the new Governor, an affable, progressive fellow with a sound head on his shoulders. A confirmed bachelor cherishing solitude above all else, Collins now found himself hemmed in by chattering women, all congratulating him on saving the Governor's life.

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" Routine," he kept saying, swallowing whisky, " all in the day's work." Which merely intensified their admiration. Finally, in desperation, he heard himself say, " It'll happen again," and reflected that he ought, after all, to go steady with the drink.

For a moment he was alone, and then a young woman with the unmistakable features of a half-caste touched his elbow lightly and took him aside.

" I need money," she said urgently. " I must have money."

" We all need money, Miss Colman."

" Look, Superintendent, just a loan, say fifty pounds. I'll repay, I promise."

Collins' blue eyes were hard, his narrow lips drawn tight. " Why should I give you fifty pounds? Why should I give you one penny? "

" I'm on to something. I'm sure of it."

" You're always on to something."

" No, this time I mean it. I've got a real lead."

Collins grunted. " I don't want leads, Miss Colman, I want the leaders of the Pan African Congress, Kaiwadi in particular. You're aware who planned the attempt on the Governor's life, I suppose? Bring me Kaiwadi and you can name your price."

Their eyes met, bearing no love. She shrugged angrily and turned on her heel.

" So there you are," Stanton said peevishly, catching her arm. " Fancy deserting me to that awful female. Let's get out of here. I've had enough."

He pulled her through the crowd, out of the room, on to the cool expanse of lawn. His usual equanimity, she noticed, had vanished. " The whole thing," he stormed, " makes me sick! It's filthy! All those polite humbug speeches, everyone scratching everyone else's back. Who do they think they are, telling Africa what's good for it? There was scarcely a black man in there! "

" You need a drink, Ben. We both do."

She drove him back to his hotel, he talking all the while.

" Look—I don't like murder and terrorism. They don't happen to be my cup of tea. But you've got to see their point of view. There's no other way. I reckon a bomb planted in that room tonight might have given History the extra push it needs."

He flung a cigarette end out of the window.

" If only I could meet these people. If only I could get an interview with Kaiwadi or one of the other leaders. I believe my paper could give them the moral support they need. By God, they *do* need our support in Britain. The trouble is, I've no damned contacts. It's like the old needle in the haystack. And what a haystack! "

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He ran a finger under the rim of his collar.

" Maybe I can help you, Ben," she said quietly.

" You? "

" I've lived here all my life, in this one town. I've no more idea where Kaiwadi is than you have, or the police have for that matter, but I can give you the contacts at the bottom. From then on you're on your own. After all, you're well known. They'll trust you if they trust anyone. Is it a deal? "

For the first time he realised the full extent of her attraction for him. It wasn't merely that she was unselfishly offering help: it was much more than that. He reached across and gently twisted her ear.

" It's a deal," he said.

The Weekend in Havana was a nightclub of doubtful reputation situated on the southern outskirts of the town, a place rarely frequented by Europeans. Stanton had to pay ten shillings for two tickets to an old doorman who proceeded to wink grotesquely and offer his " sister " for sale.

" Fine sister, big breasts, massah," he declared, undeterred by Thea's presence.

" Some other time," snapped Stanton, clinging to the reins of his temper, rubbing irritably at the heat rash on his back. Thea led him to a reserved corner table, and immediately an aged African waiter rushed across and flapped the table with his grimy apron.

" Good time tonight? " he leered.

" Bring two gins," said Stanton curtly.

Thea, sitting close beside him, feline and immensely provocative in a new French creation, a woman extraordinarily mature for her years, laid a restraining hand on his arm. " Relax," she urged him gently, " unwind, Ben, relax."

They swallowed the gins, ordered two more, and then danced, the first time they had danced together, Stanton finding himself initiated, hesitantly at first, then with mounting confidence and exhilaration into the compelling rhythm of the Highlife.

Returning to their table, he felt physically disturbed, wanting her badly, urgently, almost forgetting the object of their visit. But her brown cat's eyes roamed the room, alert and frightened, and suddenly she left him, returning a moment later with a tall African, aloof and dignified, dressed in a flowered shirt and cotton trousers.

" Ben, this is Musa," she said.

Stanton rose and took the man's hand.

" I think you come with me," Musa suggested frigidly.

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Stanton looked questioningly to Thea.

" I've got a headache, Ben. I think I'll go home. Take care of yourself." Her expression silenced his protest.

" I'll ring you," she said, and then was gone.

Musa led him across the dance floor, through a door concealed in the wall behind a poster, down a maze of dark corridors, out into the street, into a smaller building, and finally into a small steaming room lit by a harsh, unshaded electric light, a room full of Africans, cigarette smoke, and empty gin bottles. Musa motioned him to a chair.

" This is Mr. Stanton," he said shortly.

There was little love in their eyes, only blatant suspicion, and for the first time in his life Stanton experienced the stigma of having a white skin.

A large brutal fellow on his left, with a pattern of tribal scars on his cheeks, opened the interrogation. " So you're a journalist, eh? " he said aggressively.

" That's right."

" And how long have you been with us? " asked another man.

" Two weeks."

" What paper did you say? " asked Musa.

" *The People's Daily*."

They nodded.

" I don't know any such paper," muttered the big man.

" I know it," said Musa. He opened a cupboard and flung a pile of past numbers on the table, scattering the cigarette ash. He opened a copy at random and held it up for inspection. Stanton's name was spread in capitals over the fourth page.

Musa put a hand on his shoulder. " Good man," he said softly.

" How do we know he's Stanton? " grunted the big man who had been drinking heavily.

Stanton showed them his passport.

" Easy to forge a passport," said the big man, rubbing his scars.

" We can't be too careful," said another, evoking a chorus of assent.

Feeling hemmed in, universally mistrusted, Stanton thumbed through the pile of papers until he came to the issue for the second week in February. He opened up the page, revealing a small photo beside his column. They all stared at it carefully.

" He's Stanton all right," said Musa impatiently. " Let's get down to some business."

" Anyway, what does he want with us? What does any European want with us? "

" He wants to help us," snapped Musa.

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"And himself."

"That's his affair."

"I don't know so much," growled the big man.

"You don't know much," snapped Musa, silencing him by the weight of his own authority within the group. "We'll give you every help we can," he told Stanton.

"I want to interview your leaders," the journalist said. "Kaiwadi, if possible."

The guarded look returned to their faces.

"Many people would like to meet Kaiwadi," Musa said, "including the police. You must understand we have been betrayed before."

Realising he had gone too far too fast and that there had been a warrant out for the arrest of the leaders since the attempt on the Governor's life, Stanton lit a cigarette and spoke to them cautiously, weighing his words.

"Let me explain. My paper has always been anxious to help your movement by giving it as much support and favourable publicity in Britain as possible. You must know that many papers describe you as a bunch of murderers. We don't: you need only look through any of these past numbers. But our reading public wants the personal angle, interviews with your leaders, so that they can personally explain their policies and refute the slanders levelled against them."

He watched intently for their reaction.

The big fellow drained his glass and spat on the floor. "Why should you help us, massah? You're a white man: I don't like white men!" He clenched his huge fist and thumped it on the table, causing the glasses to leap.

Musa rounded on him, his eyes blazing with sudden anger. "Get out! Go on, get out!" The big man shambled out, belching noisily.

"All in favour of helping Mr. Stanton, raise their hands," commanded Musa, raising his own. A forest of arms sprang up.

"Look," said Musa firmly, "we'll do our best for you. Our very best. But things are hard at the present. We can't be too careful. Give me your number and I'll ring you sometime. O.K.?"

"I'm deeply grateful," said Stanton. This time they all rose and offered their hands, awakening in him both pride and humility at being accepted into their confidence. He said again, "I'm deeply grateful."

Outside, in the street, Musa's manner became suddenly apologetic.

"Look—I don't like to interfere with your private affairs—

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but we have to be very careful—this girl, Thea I mean, how did you meet her?"

Stanton looked surprised. "Why, she gave me a lift to the airport, that's all."

Musa nodded gravely. "I'm sure she's O.K. We check on everyone if we can. But you can't be too careful with coloureds, Mr. Stanton. Neither one thing nor the other, neither black nor white." He opened his hands expressively. "They have no allegiances."

"I'm surprised to hear racial prejudice from you."

Musa sighed. "Not prejudice, I assure you. Just facts. We can't be too careful. Please guard your tongue, Mr. Stanton, and never, on any account, speak of your meeting with us. Good night."

Thea rang him the following morning.

"Any luck, Ben?"

"Not much. Hard to say," he said guardedly.

"Oh, I *am* sorry." She sounded genuinely disappointed and he was touched. As a journalist travelling the world in search of news, he had adopted a philosophy of self-reliance and solitude. He didn't expect help from any quarter: he didn't need roots or stability. He hunted alone. Or so he told himself. Yet his desire to see Thea again, to touch her soft brown skin, to bathe in the warm waters of her sympathy, this was an urgent thing, something he couldn't escape.

"How about a drink at six?" he suggested.

"Lovely," came her voice over the phone, dark and rich like rough tobacco. "I'll be there."

She came at half past six, swaying gracefully into the hotel lobby, defying the world around her to think its worst, aware that her charms could never quite compensate for the stigma of her birth. She seized the ashtray in front of Stanton and counted the stubs maliciously. Again he felt strangely disconcerted. He was not easily disconcerted.

"You're late," he said flatly.

"Life's work is never done, Ben."

"That's true," he said gravely. "What will you have?"

"I live on gins, you ought to know that by now," she drawled, curling herself into the white leather seat beside him. "The sooner my guts rot away the better."

He ordered two more gins. You can't be too careful, Musa had said, clasping his hand in mutual trust. Well, he had no quarrel with that. But watching Thea talk, the sentences issuing forth in short, unpredictable bursts of wicked intensity, he had no doubt of her sincerity.

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His attraction for her, however transitory, was not hard to fathom. He was a stranger to this world, detached from its prejudices, unmoved by its passions, a liberal-minded intruder living in a vacuum, needing and giving the straight, ungrudging human sympathy which she also needed. The light of day faded abruptly, the temperature lowered, the mosquitoes came and with them a welcome breeze, coaxing them both to talk without inhibition, revealing their lives to a stranger, really talking to themselves, searching for the missing links in their own lives.

For Stanton this long evening of constant gins and cigarettes became one of those rare, electric experiences where physical desire between man and woman remains remote, yet real, a tantalising backcloth for the real play.

She talked a good deal, of her childhood in a small coastal village, the unwanted product of an illicit conception. Her father, a colonial tax official, she could not even remember, except from the conversation of adults, the relatives of her African mother whom her father had quickly deserted. A mission school had taught her English, introduced her to European tastes and standards, alienating her from her peasant family. Cheerfully she accepted the view that the world is a jungle where the fittest, those with wits and cunning, survived. Yet beneath the hard veneer lay a humorous acceptance of certain patterns of life which left room for a type of idealism not so very different from his own.

As the long night passed, their words spinning patterns of magic in the still air, he realised that, for this one night at least, he was desperately in love with her, and that their need was mutual. And when, finally, they went to his room together, when they had abandoned themselves to each other unreservedly, there was nothing in his life, absolutely nothing, which he wished to conceal from her.

He didn't see Thea for some days after that. In fact he had a good deal of work to get through, including a trip to the Northern Region to report on the local political situation. He sent off several dispatches to London, but his editor continued to plead for an interview with one of the African leaders.

Returning to the capital, he realised that the situation was fast deteriorating. Violent, often murderous attacks on colonial officials and Africans who collaborated with them were growing increasingly frequent. The police search was intensified. Clearly a showdown was imminent.

From the time of his return Stanton knew he was being followed. One or two easily identifiable Africans were invariably

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hanging round outside his hotel, ready to shadow his movements through the town. But he still cherished hopes that Musa would make contacts for him, and the organisation's anxiety to check his reliability seemed understandable. Accordingly he made no efforts to throw off his pursuers.

Thea appeared less frequently. Her manner towards him had changed. She seemed more formal and polite, as if resentful at her previous lack of reserve, fearful perhaps that she had forfeited his respect. For his part he did everything possible to counteract such an impression, treating her with courtesy and affection. But she remained uneasy.

A week after his return he was lying on his bed, half naked, trying to sleep off the effects of a heavy lunch and several pints of beer, when the phone rang, dragging him abruptly through layers of murky consciousness.

He recognised Musa's voice. "Are you alone?" the African said cautiously.

"Absolutely."

"I think we can help you."

Stanton was suddenly fully awake. "Good. Anything you say."

"Meet me at the National Bank at four-fifteen. Front entrance."

"I'll be there."

After an anxious pause Musa said, "Don't talk to anyone."

"Of course." He heard the receiver slammed down at the other end.

Having bathed and shaved, he found a clean white shirt, reflected morosely that it would be a damp rag on his back within an hour, and then surveyed his burnt face in the mirror with mixed feelings. The phone rang again.

It was Thea. "I've got a free afternoon, Ben," she volunteered. "I'd like to see you."

"Is it urgent?"

"Oh well, of course, if you don't want to see me—"

"Naturally I want to see you, Thea."

"Well?"

"It's just that I've got a damned busy afternoon. I'm sorry. This evening perhaps."

"What time?"

"I don't know. It's hard to say when I'll be free."

Her voice hardened. "Look, Ben, I just don't want to be a burden round anyone's neck. If you're tired of me, you only have to say so once. I must say I've noticed a change in you since that night."

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He felt wretched. A woman's emotions and reason, he knew, are rarely married. He still cared for Thea deeply, still felt sufficiently implicated in their relationship not to want to hurt her. Above all, he just didn't want to hurt her, to treat her as others had evidently done.

"Thea," he pleaded, "I want to see you very badly. Really I do. But please understand I'm on to something terribly important this afternoon."

"Oh Ben, how wonderful. How absolutely marvellous. Tell me about it."

"Well, I've a date with Musa at four-fifteen. I've a hunch the thing's in the bag. Suppose I ring you later?"

"I'll keep my fingers crossed for you."

He replaced the receiver, feeling faintly uneasy, as if he had been caught out somehow, but unable to fathom how or why.

Emerging from his hotel at four o'clock, he felt buoyantly optimistic for the first time since his arrival in the colony. He had no sooner begun to march across the square towards the taxi rank when a taxi drew up beside him.

"How much to the National Bank?"

The driver smiled affably. "Two shillings, massah."

The offer was so phenomenally low that Stanton couldn't bring himself to haggle, and he climbed in feeling unusually well disposed towards the human race in general. The taxi swept down the street, scattering children and chickens in its path, turning sharp right at the crossroads. Beyond the Africa Company buildings on the left he could see the imposing steel, glass, and concrete edifice of the National Bank gleaming in the sun. The taxi pulled in sharply.

Musa was waiting as arranged.

Before Stanton could move the African leapt forward, casting a single glance to right and left, hurled himself into the taxi and flung an address at the driver which Stanton didn't catch. They moved rapidly out of the centre of the town into the African shanty area, skirting the busy markets and the mammy wagons, twisting at great speed through a maze of narrow alleyways where no European was to be seen. Stanton, who had begun to feel like an abducted heiress, found Musa's tension and silence infectious.

Finally they drew to a halt. Stanton paid the driver and then followed Musa down a sunless alley peopled by shabby wooden huts with roofs of corrugated iron. The stench was almost unbearable.

Musa glanced back at the taxi which hadn't moved. His eyes narrowed.

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" That driver didn't haggle over the fare," he commented.

" It takes all sorts," said Stanton.

" There's only one sort of driver here," Musa said firmly, " and they always haggle."

Abruptly he pulled Stanton through a wooden gate into a tiny yard full of refuse bins, children, chickens, women, and idle men who eyed him coldly. Musa led the way into a shuttered room full of flies, motioned him to a chair and, without a word, left him. Excited, speculative chatter in a native tongue floated in through the window. His mood of exaltation was ebbing fast as his stomach began to heave uncomfortably at the stench.

After what seemed an eternity Musa returned with a short, balding man in early middle age, wearing a crumpled brown suit and no tie. Stanton began to wonder whether this whole business was a hoax.

" I'm pleased to meet you, Mr. Stanton," the man said in impeccable English, extending his hand. " My name is Kaiwadi."

Really, he didn't know what he had expected. A roll of thunder? A clash of cymbals and a blinding light? Yet it took more than a moment to steady his nerves, to adjust himself to the idea that this mild, courteous, quietly spoken man was in fact Kaiwadi, a terrorist leader of the Pan African Congress, the man the police wanted above all others.

" Well," Kaiwadi said briskly, with the air of one who has little time to spare, " what can I do for you? "

Hesitantly at first, then with greater assurance, Stanton fired off the numerous questions he had prepared, probing tactfully Kaiwadi's mentality, his future plans, the nature of his organisation. Behind the mild exterior he began to discern the passionate intensity of an idealist, a man who believed without reservations in the justice of his cause, a man for whom the end justified the means, a born leader, a fierce lover of his own people, his own race.

Finally, as the interview drew to a close, Stanton became aware how moved he was to have been in the company of such a man, how honoured to have been admitted to his confidence, how proud to have leapt over the barrier of race. For him this was one of those rare instances when he felt assured that his calling as a journalist had its value.

" My paper will do everything possible to publicise your views," he said.

" I'm sure it will," Kaiwadi said quietly, once again extending his hand. " I'm equally sure I can rely on you to be discreet, and to avoid reference to the manner and place of our meeting."

" You can rely on me."

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" It's the existence of whites like yourself, Mr. Stanton, which gives us hope—"

But his words were cut short as the silence was shattered by a bedlam of noise, the roaring of engines in the street outside, the hoarse cries of frightened women, the angry shouts of fighting men, the staccato commands of the invaders. Kaiwadi and Musa sprang for the backdoor but were too late: the house was surrounded by police.

Kaiwadi turned on him, his eyes frozen with hatred, his voice thick with venom. " There is only one thing on earth more despicable than a policeman, Mr. Stanton, and that is a police informer."

Stanton sat slumped beside Collins in a police Land Rover. The Superintendent was speaking calmly, giving no indication of excitement or a sense of triumph, talking partly to Stanton, partly to himself, partly to the world in general. Upright and assured in his crisp, starched uniform, he had about him the dispassionate air of one lecturing a naughty schoolboy.

" Well, you evidently have a lot to learn. Policemen are not fools, you know. If I were you, I'd avoid taxis that offer themselves in this country. You never know what they're up to. Always choose your own. I suppose you fellows have ideals of a sort, though I'm deuced if I can understand them. If you think that betraying your country and helping terrorists and murderers is idealism, then I suppose you're entitled to your opinions. But you musn't complain if we disagree. Our deportation laws are designed precisely for chaps like you . . ."

They swept into the broad gravel drive of Police Headquarters, causing the sentries to salute smartly, and came to a halt before the main entrance.

" I don't suppose you value my advice, Stanton, but I'll give you one last piece all the same. You fellows come out here full of book-knowledge, thinking you know everything. Well, you don't know much. If you must have a woman in this country, then take a good look at the colour of her skin. White women, yes. Black women—it's a matter of taste. But coloureds, half-castes—never. They always demand a standard of life which society is reluctant to give them. Consequently they'll do anything for money. Absolutely anything." © David Caute 1960

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Liberty is like water: it tends to evaporate unless you prevent it doing so.

ROBERT BOLT

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NO ALIBI

" I had a record," he said bitterly,
" and records never forget "

BY JOHN P. FORAN

A SLENDER, medium-sized man entered the state tax office. He came in doubtfully, frowning at the green tax slip he held in one hand, and the cashier glanced up, recognised the notice—another taxpayer—and went on checking the tax receipts in the cash drawer.

The slender man wandered over to the grilled window.

" Do I pay this here? " he asked.

The cashier nodded, reached out a hand. When the notice didn't slide under the grille, he glanced up impatiently. He stared into the muzzle of a gun.

" Don't move," said the slender man quietly. " You have a wife and three children and I'll kill you if you step on that alarm button."

The cashier's face drained white. He swallowed. Then his heart was pounding so fast he could hardly breathe.

One thought possessed his shocked mind. Identification. So many witnesses gave conflicting testimony; he stared unblinkingly through the window, absorbing each detail of the hold-up man's appearance. He mustn't make a mistake.

The hold-up man wore a grey hat set back enough to show a strong widow's peak. A low forehead ended with thick brows over deep-set, brown eyes. A tuft of hair grew out of his left ear. A swelling on the left side of his mouth gave his lips a tight, resentful line. He wore a grey workshirt under a worn leather windcheater.

The hand that drew a brown paper bag from inside the windcheater was grimy, the fingernails fringed with dirt. " Stack the bills in that." The slender man slid the bag under the grille.

He watched the cashier's hands fumble with the bag. " Steady," he said. " Do it right and I'll be out of here in a minute."

The cashier lifted the bills out of the drawer and stuffed them into the bag.

While he was doing it, the slender man took a small slip of

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paper out of his pocket, crumpled it up, and dropped it on the floor.

"Now open the window," he directed.

The cashier snapped the catch and swung the grille back. He set the paper bag on the glass shelf. The slender man slid it off and inside the windcheater. He ran the zipper up.

"Thanks," he said. "You did fine. Your wife will be grateful." He backed to the door, groped behind him with his left hand, and found the doorknob. He slipped the gun out of sight as he opened the door.

"O.K., you can sound off now." He smiled, exposing discoloured teeth. Suddenly he was gone.

The cashier stared at the closed door. He licked his lips. Then he realised he was standing there, puzzling over something he couldn't understand—a feeling that he was about to put his foot in a trap. He moved suddenly.

The slender man reached the end of the corridor as the alarm blasted. Without haste, he opened the window and tugged a folded rope from inside his trousers. He let the rope unfold out of the window and down to the first of the stores that lined the street side behind the state building.

He set the steel hook attached to the end of the rope against the windowsill and climbed out. Methodically he wrapped the rope round his right foot, crossed his left foot over, and stepped on the rope. He eased his weight to the rope, reached up and pulled the window down until it was almost closed. He then slid down the rope to the roof of the store.

A quick, practised sideflip loosened the hook and the rope snaked down. He caught the hook and carried it to the rear of the store roof, where he set it against the corner of the chimney. He put his weight on the rope and, when the hook held, he walked backwards off the edge of the roof and down the wall of the yard behind the store.

Abandoning the rope, he ran the length of the yard. A high fence separated the rear of an apartment house from the last store. He ran at the fence and jumped; with a rubber-soled shoe against the fence, he reached up and caught hold of the top. As he slid down the far side, he glanced back at the state building. A woman was leaning out of the window, pointing and screaming.

He dropped out of sight and followed the yard round the building to the next avenue. He paused on the kerb and signalled a passing taxi. A police siren screamed. The taxi stopped as the police car raced by and made the turn on two wheels.

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" Cowboys," grunted the cabbie. " And they gripe about us guys. Where to, mister? "

The slender man gave him an address that carried them three blocks south and two west. He handed the cabbie a five-dollar bill.

" Sorry, I can't change it," said the cabbie. " Just started to work at four."

The slender man smiled, fished a single dollar out of his pocket. " Keep the change," he said. " I picked up plenty in that hold-up back there."

The cabbie grinned. " If you ever hold up a bank, let me know, huh? "

" I'll do that."

He waved, walked south along the avenue. The taxi went on into the sidestreet. The slender man turned into a shabby building near the corner. He raced to the back of the hall and pushed the backdoor open. A yard angled round the building to an alley opening on the sidestreet. He came out of the alley and walked quickly to the next avenue, where he boarded a cross-town bus. He got off after a few stops and caught another taxi.

He said, " The Plaza Hotel."

Just before getting out of the cab, he took the paper bag from inside the windcheater. He scribbled a name on it with a stubby yellow pencil. With the bag tucked under his arm, he strode into the hotel lobby. At the desk he checked the name on the bag and said, " Miss Carol Andrews live here? "

The clerk ran a cool eye over his worn clothes, the paper bag. " Just a minute." He checked through to the room. Miss Andrews was expecting a messenger. " O.K., go on up. Room 814."

On the eighth floor, the slender man checked the hall before knocking. Instantly the door was flung open wide and a dark-haired woman said eagerly, " Ernie! I'm so glad to see you again—" Her voice choked off. She stared at him, her hands tightening on the edge of the door.

The slender man smiled faintly and, before she could recover, he stepped in, took the door away from her and closed it. He leaned back and let his eyes run over her. A tailored silk shantung blouse and a neat skirt followed the curves of her small but well-developed body. Her features were small and shaped to an oval; her eyes, violet.

" Who are you? " She backed away, anger lifting her voice. " What do you want? "

" Florrie," he said softly. " I thought I remembered you—your eyes." He shook his head.

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She gasped. "Ernie—it is you!" She moved to him, touched his sleeve as though to make sure. Her violet eyes, now widened with disbelief, seemed enormous in her oval face. "You look so—so different!" Her eyes shifted over his low forehead, the tuft of hair in his left ear, his tight lips.

"Now don't get in an uproar." He patted her arm. "Did you buy the clothes?"

She nodded. "I hope I bought the right kind, the sizes you gave me on the phone." She pulled her eyes away, hurried round the bed and opened the cupboard door. She took out two valises, a two-suiter and a smaller weekend grip. She set them on the bed. "I never bought men's clothes before—" She looked at him, sagged against the bags. "Ernie, what have they done to you?"

He smiled. "Be with you in ten minutes." He took the bags from her, went into the bathroom, and closed the door.

Setting the weekend bag on the basin, he snapped the catches and lifted the top. He tore the paper bag open and stacked the bills in the bottom of the grip. The windcheater and hat went in for ballast, and he pressed the top down, locked the bag, and set it on the floor.

He opened the larger bag. It contained a complete outfit—a grey suit, white shirt, maroon tie, underwear, socks, shoes—all new. He undressed and put on the new underwear. He found a toilet kit under the grey suit, zipped it open, and set it on the basin. "Now," he said.

He took a look in the mirror, then ducked his head and went to work. A steel clamp with a rubber mould attached came out of his mouth. He ran hot water over it, dropped it into the toilet kit. He washed his teeth, spat out stained toothpaste. He kept scrubbing his teeth until the paste came a clear white.

He lifted the plug lever and ran hot water into the basin. When it was two-thirds filled, he bent down and submerged his head to his brows. He sopped water against his left ear. After a while, brown hairs began to come loose and drift to the bottom of the bowl. The tuft fell out of his ear in a lump. He accelerated the process by running a comb through his hair. Finally no more hairs came loose. He emptied the bowl, flushed down the remaining hairs, and let the bowl fill again. He washed his hair, face, and neck, then dried himself.

He combed his hair. His forehead, now, was high and curving, the hair thinning back from his temples. His brows were equally thin. The fleshy swelling about his mouth was gone, leaving his lips in natural sensitive lines. He sucked his lips back and examined his clean, white teeth in the mirror.

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He knotted the maroon tie neatly in the inverted V of the white collar. The grey suit fitted him and he shifted his shoulders under it, pleased. He found a nail file in the kit and cleaned his nails. The worn clothes and toilet kit went into the large bag—remembering, he dug out the gun and wallet. He stuck the gun in his belt, the wallet in his hip pocket. He closed the big bag. He was ready. A faint smile wreathed his lips as he opened the door.

Florrie got up slowly from the edge of the bed, bewilderment blanking her features.

"Like me better this way?" He laughed, patted his pockets, and looked around.

"Got a cigarette?"

She moved to the table and took one out of her handbag.

"Ernie, I don't understand," she said, her eyes busy as she held the match to the cigarette.

"You're not supposed to," he said.

She stood holding the burning match. "Do you want a drink or—anything?"

"No." He took the match and dropped it in the tray. "Sit down," he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Yes, Ernie."

She sat in the chair by the window. He perched on the sill. He let his eyes run over her, linger hungrily on the curves of her body. She moved restively.

"Ernie."

"You haven't changed," he said.

"I—I've put on some weight." Her hands moved selfconsciously over her blouse. "I tried not to, but—"

"On you it looks good, very good."

Her hands became still. She looked pleased.

"Why did you do it?" he asked.

"What?" Puzzled, her mind groped for one particular thing, then she understood. "Let's not talk about it, Ernie," she said quickly. "I—I just did it. Please forget about it."

"Forget?" His voice hardened. "I never forget, Florrie. *Never!*"

She covered concern with a quick laugh. "Gosh, Ernie, I was so surprised when you phoned me. I had no idea they'd let you out of prison, and I asked if you were calling me from the prison—silly, wasn't it?" Her eyes pleaded with him to go along with her.

"I never did anything for you," he said. "Saw you around here and there—never anything."

"You were nice to me, Ernie."

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When she didn't go on, he looked puzzled. "Six years of sending me cigarettes and magazines, letters, candy, books—all that for a kind word?"

"Well—" She shifted uneasily, then went on, "Ernie, remember I wasn't well at the Erlichs' party and you made me go home and you got a doctor and found an all-night drugstore—"

Impatiently, he said, "Hell, you were ill, weren't you?"

"Yes, but you stayed up all night when you had to go to work the next day. I didn't do much, Ernie," she protested, "just sending things. You were up there, all alone—only because you made a couple of mistakes when you were hardly more than a boy."

"I had a record," he said bitterly, "and records never forget."

The whip in his voice formed pain in her eyes. She watched him brood at the cigarette. When he said, "You were sorry for me," she stiffened anxiously.

"No, Ernie, not that." She started to go on but didn't know how.

"Florrie, I never really thanked you—" He got up, holding the cigarette upright so the ash wouldn't spill, and her eyes followed him over to the table. He crushed the cigarette out. "But it's been with me all the time, every day, every night."

"Yes, Ernie?"

"I thought the two of us," he said awkwardly. "You and me?" He stopped. They stared across the room at each other.

Florrie licked her lower lip. "Ernie, that's why I—I kept reading your letters, looking for—do you really mean it, Ernie?"

"If it's all right with you."

"Oh yes, Ernie. Yes!"

He cleared his throat. He came over to the window. "How much money do you have?"

"There's about four hundred left." She glanced at her handbag on the table, started to get up. "I drew it all out in case you needed—"

He held out an arresting hand. "You're going to need it." He settled back against the window. "Do you think you can get out of town without being followed?"

"I think so."

"Good. We're getting out of this state, some place where I don't have a record."

"Ernie, let's go away together." Worried, she put a hand on his knee. "A waitress can get a job anywhere and you have a trade, you're a watchmaker; we'll get along. Please, Ernie, without you I'll be scared."

He put his hand on hers. "I can't. I gotta finish something I

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started." He took her hand and held it. He stared out of the window, thinking. "There's a place down in Pensacola, Florida; I spent my vacation there one year. It's—"

"Could we have a honeymoon, Ernie?" she asked.

"Yeah, that's what I meant. Now here's how to get there . . ."

When he finished, he looked down at her small hand in his. "Florrie—there's a chance I might not make it. If I don't, everything in those two bags belongs to you."

She glanced at the bags. She started a question, bit it back.

"Good girl." He patted her hand and got up. "I should meet you in a week." He kicked the bag containing the money. "Don't let this one out of your sight," he warned.

"I won't, Ernie." She started up as he moved towards the door. "Ernie."

He turned, saw her yearning towards him, her violet eyes blurred. He moved swiftly. They came together with a sharp impact. Their lips exchanged the dreams of the past six years.

"Florrie. Your eyes—they're so pretty. How come a dozen guys haven't—?"

She laughed, her eyes shining. "Yes, I like you better this way."

She pulled his lips down hard on hers. "I'll be waiting for you, Ernie."

"See you, Florrie."

Ernie listened to heavy steps coming along the hall outside his furnished room. Knuckles rapped against the door panel. Ernie let the top half of the evening paper fold over and stared at the door. He folded the paper again, tossed it on the bed, and got up.

The man in the hall was big, a head taller than Ernie, four stone heavier. His face was heavy-featured, the skin coarse and lined. He breathed noisily as he said, "Hullo, Ernie. Not surprised to see me, eh?"

"What ex-con would be surprised to see Detective Cooper?"

Cooper grunted. He shouldered into the room, crowded the space between the bureau and the bed. "Don't be bitter, Ernie." His eyes roved the bare room. "We all make mistakes."

"Not you," said Ernie. "You don't make mistakes, you just get convictions."

Cooper turned to the bureau, yanked the drawers open, slammed them shut. He lumbered to the wardrobe in the corner and almost yanked the door off its frail hinges getting it open. He peered in at the cheap suit Ernie had worn from prison. His eyes slanted around, ran over the neat outfit Ernie was wearing.

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" No leather windcheater," he said softly.

" Never wear them," said Ernie.

Cooper went at the bed, breathing heavily as he heaved the mattress over. His big hands kneaded the pillow. He checked the thin cushions on the chair. He grunted, straightened up.

" Looking for something? " inquired Ernie.

Cooper's eyes narrowed. " Just routine, Ernie," he said heavily. " Just routine."

" I recognised it," said Ernie. " Somebody hold up a petrol station? "

Cooper's fleshy face settled. " Let's go, " he said coldly.

The clerk in the District Attorney's outer office looked up as they came in. He reached for the intercom box. " Cooper with Ernie Walters." He let the switch go, jerked his head at the door.

The D.A. was standing at the window to the right of his desk, his hands clasped behind his back. He said, " Sit down, Ernie," without turning round.

Ernie eased into the chair beside the large highly polished desk. His brown eyes lifted to the D. A.'s imposing profile—high flat forehead, long nose, strong jaw. The one grey eye Ernie could see made little shifting motions as it followed moving objects down in the street. A blaring horn heightened the tension-producing silence in the office. Finally the D. A. turned and faced Ernie. " Ernie, did you hold up the tax office at four-thirty yesterday afternoon? "

Ernie reached into his coat pocket and took out a fresh pack of cigarettes. They waited while he slowly and methodically tore open the pack and took out a cigarette. He put the pack away, took out a book of matches. Cooper's breathing became audible. " You heard him," he rasped.

Ernie lit the cigarette, then looked at the D. A. " No, I didn't," he said quietly. " I was in my room reading." His eyes shifted to Cooper. " Sorry, no alibi."

" Ernie, this isn't going to get you anywhere." The D. A. went round his desk and sat down. " Ernie," he said earnestly, and started to go on.

" Yes? " said Ernie innocently.

The D. A. chilled. He reached for the voice box. " Bring in the hackie."

Ernie got up and faced the door as the cabbie came in after the clerk.

" Is this the man? " asked the D. A.

" Him? " Surprise moved the cabbie's face as he studied Ernie. " He looks something like the guy, same build, same

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eyes . . ." His voice faded. He frowned. " I think it's him."

" That's all," said the D. A. " Bring in the woman who saw him from the window."

The woman bustled in importantly. She was a big woman, big breasts, big hips, all aggressive movements. Her grey eyes darted to Ernie. She thrust an accusing finger out to arm's length and cried, " That's him! That's the man! I'd know him anywhere! "

The D. A. shot the clerk a quick look. " Thank you."

The woman's mouth popped open as the clerk herded her towards the door. " But aren't you going to let me—I tell you he is the man! "

The door closed.

Cooper towered over Ernie, breathing noisily.

The D. A. leaned forward. " Well, Ernie? "

" Well, what? " Ernie flicked ash into the desk tray.

" Care to make a statement now? "

" A statement." Ernie considered the burning tip of his cigarette. " I made a statement six years ago. I'd like to make it again. I didn't hold up that petrol station. I was in my room reading—"

The D. A.'s jaw muscles bulged. He reached for the box and snapped, " Bring in the cashier! "

The cashier came in slowly, his face and drooping shoulders holding the wearing effects of nervous tension. He stopped short when he saw Ernie, then came on, an intent look about his eyes.

" Well, is this the man? "

The cashier said uncertainly, " He has the same eyes, brown. But—" He frowned.

" But what? " said the D. A. impatiently.

" Well, his hair is different, and his mouth." He looked down at Ernie's clean hands. " His smile," he said suddenly.

" Smile," growled Cooper.

Ernie showed gleaming white teeth.

The cashier's mouth twitched. He started nervously as the D. A. barked, " You said you could identify him beyond a shadow of a doubt! "

" I know." The cashier looked embarrassed. " I *feel* like he's the man, but he *looks* different."

" That's all," said the D. A.

" They recognised his eyes," said Cooper triumphantly, " and that's one thing you can't disguise—your eyes. And I got word from the warden, Ernie: You swore you'd get even when you got out."

" And you dropped a scrap of paper with *Ernie* scribbled on

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it," the D. A. went on. "You ran into Cooper after you were released from prison and told him where you're living."

Ernie looked puzzled. "What's that got to do with it?"

"Those things didn't happen by accident, Ernie," said the D. A. coldly. "Cooper arrested you for that petrol station hold-up and I convicted you."

"And six years later," said Ernie, "a man named Luke Hagen confessed he held up the petrol station."

"Was that our fault?" sneered Cooper. "You looked a lot like Hagen, you had a record, and no alibi for that evening."

The D. A. picked a pencil off the desk and twisted it in his fingers. "You didn't hold up the petrol station, Ernie," he said, "but you did rob the state tax office. You stole about $15,000."

"That much?" Ernie looked surprised. He smiled. "You know, if I *had* held up the tax office it would just add up to—let's see, I was making about fifty a week when I was arrested six years ago. That would add up to fifteen grand, wouldn't it?"

The D. A.'s hands tightened round the pencil.

"Three witnesses who aren't quite positive," Ernie went on quietly. "I wonder what the jury will say when my attorney explains about the *four* witnesses who were *positive* I held up that petrol station." He crushed out his cigarette. "Well, am I under arrest," he said briskly, "or am I free to go?"

The pencil in the D. A.'s hands snapped under the pressure.

ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING!

Way-hay, heave-ho, hoe-down, and how many ways can you think of to spell heigh-ho? While in nautical vein, take a deep breath, open your weather eye, and tackle our quiz. If in vain, avast for page 143.

1. *Mother Carey's Chickens—what are they, and what is their pet brand of weather?*
2. *What is: a. a windsucker; b. a wind-bagger; c. a wind-sock?*
3. *Where would you find these balmy breezes? a. The Sirocco; b. the Pampero; c. the Chinook; d. the Mistral?*
4. *Sailors of yore would bring home amber or ambergris to old Mum, but where from?*
5. *Who wrote: a. Gone with the Wind; b. The Wind in the Willows; c. A High Wind in Jamaica; d. The House of the Four Winds?*
6. *Where is Windy Corner?*
7. *What is a nautical knot? And we don't mean a reef!*

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POWER

Millions of volts were flowing along the copper wire

BY JACK COPE

FROM THE GUM TREE at the corner he looked out over, well—nothing. There was nothing more after his father's place, only the veld, so flat and unchanging that the single shadowy koppie away off towards the skyline made it look more empty still. It was a lonely koppie like himself.

The one thing that made a difference was the powerline. High above the earth on its giant steel lattice towers, the powerline strode across the veld until it disappeared beyond the koppie.

It passed close to his father's place and one of the great pylons was on their ground in a square patch fenced off with barbed wire, a forbidden place. Andre used to look through the wire at the pylon. Around the steelwork itself were more screens of barbed wire and on all four sides of it enamel warning-plates with a red skull-and-crossbones said in three languages, DANGER! and there was a huge figure of volts, millions of volts.

Andre was ten and he knew volts were electricity and the line took power by a short cut far across country. It worked gold mines, it lit towns, and hauled trains and drove machinery somewhere out beyond. The power station was in the town ten miles on the other side of his father's place and the great line simply jumped right over them without stopping.

Andre filled the empty spaces in his life by imagining things. He saw an Everest film once and for a long time he was Hillary or Tensing, or both, conquering a mountain. There were no mountains so he conquered the roof of the house which wasn't very high and was made of red-painted tin. But he reached the summit and planted a flag on the lightning conductor. When he got down his mother hit his legs with a quince switch for being naughty.

Another time he conquered the koppie. It took him the whole afternoon to get there and back and it was not as exciting as he expected, being less steep than it looked from a distance, so he did not need his rope and pick. Also, he found a cow had beaten him to the summit.

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He thought of conquering one of the powerline towers. It had everything, the danger especially, and studying it from all sides he guessed he could make the summit without touching a live wire. But he was not as disobedient as all that, and he knew if he so much as went inside the barbed-wire fence his mother would skin him with the quince, not to mention his father. There were peaks which had to remain unconquered.

He used to lie and listen to the marvellous hum of the powerline, the millions of volts flowing invisible and beyond all one's ideas along the copper wires that hung so smooth and light from ties of crinkled white china looking like chinese lanterns up against the sky. Faint cracklings and murmurs and rushes of sound would sometimes come from the powerline, and at night he was sure he saw soft blue flames lapping and trembling on the wires as if they were only half peeping out of that fierce river of volts. The flames danced and their voices chattered to him of a mystery.

In the early morning when the mist was rising and the first sun's rays were shooting underneath it, the powerline sparkled like a tremendous spiderweb. It took his thoughts away into a magical distance, far—far off among gigantic machines and busy factories. That was where the world opened up.

So he loved the powerline dearly. It made a door through the distance for his thoughts. It was like him except that it never slept, and while he was dreaming it went on without stopping, crackling faintly and murmuring. Its electricity hauled up the mine skips from the heart of the earth, hurtled huge green rail units along their shining lines, and thundered day and night in the factories.

Now that the veld's green was darkening and gathering black-and-gold tints from the ripe seeds and withering grass blades, now that clear warm autumn days were coming after the summer thunderstorms, the birds began gathering on the powerline.

At evening he would see the wires like necklaces of blue-and-black glass beads when the swallows gathered. It took them days and days, it seemed, to make up their minds. He did not know whether the same swallows collected each evening in growing numbers or whether a batch went off each day to be replaced by others. He did not know enough about them. He loved to hear them making excited twittering sounds, he loved to see how they simply fell off the copper wire into space and their perfect curved wings lifted them on the air.

They were going not merely beyond the skyline like the power, they were flying thousands of miles over land and sea and mountains and forests to countries he had never dreamt of. They would fly over Everest, perhaps, they would see ships below them on blue

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seas among islands, they would build nests under bridges and on chimneys where other boys in funny clothes would watch them. The birds opened another door for him and he liked them too, very much.

He watched the swallows one morning as they took off from their perch. Suddenly, as if they had a secret signal, a whole stretch of them along a wire would start together. They dropped forward into the air and their blue-and-white wings flicked out. Flying seemed to be the easiest thing in the world. They swooped and flew up, crisscrossing in flight and chirping crazily, so pleased to be awake in the morning.

Then another flight of them winged off, and another. There was standing-room only on those wires. Close to the lofty pylon and the gleaming china ties another flight took off. But one of the swallows stayed behind, quite close to the tie. Andre watched them fall forward, but it alone did not leave the line. It hung there flapping its wings and he saw it was caught by its leg.

He should have been going to school but he stood watching the swallow, his cap pulled over his white hair and eyes wrinkled against the light. After a minute the swallow stopped flapping and hung there. He wondered how it could have got caught, maybe in the wire binding or at a join. Swallows had short legs and small black claws; he had caught one once in its nest and held it in his hands before it struggled free and was gone in a flash. He thought the bird on the powerline would get free soon, but looking at it there he had a tingling kind of pain in his chest and in one leg as if he too were caught by the foot.

Andre wanted to rush back and tell his mother, only she would scold him for being late to school. So he climbed on his bike, and with one more look up at the helpless bird there against the sky and the steel framework of the tower, he rode off to the bus.

At school he thought once or twice about the swallow, but mostly he forgot about it and that made him feel bad. Anyway, he thought, it would be free by the time he got home. Twisting and flapping a few times, it was sure to work its foot out; and there was no need for him to worry about it hanging there.

Coming back from the crossroads he felt anxious, but he did not like to look up until he was quite near. Then he shot one glance at the top of the pylon—the swallow was still there, its wings spread but not moving. It was dead, he guessed, as he stopped and put down one foot. Then he saw it flutter and fold up its wings. He felt awful to think it had hung there all day, trapped.

The boy went in and called his mother and they stood off some

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distance below the powerline and looked at the bird. The mother shaded her eyes with her hand. It was a pity, she said, but really she was sure it would free itself somehow. Nothing could be done about it.

"Couldn't—?" he began.

"Couldn't nothing, dear," she said quite firmly so that he knew she meant business. "Now stop thinking about it, and tomorrow you'll see."

His father came home at six and had tea, and afterwards there was a little time to work in his patch of vegetables out at the back. Andre followed him and he soon got round to the swallow on the powerline.

"I know," his father said. "Mama told me."

"It's still there."

"Well—" his father tilted up his old working-hat and looked at him hard with his sharp blue eyes—"well, we can't do anything about it, can we, now?"

"No, Papa, but—"

"But what?"

He kicked at a stone and said nothing more. He could see his father was kind of stiff about it; that meant he did not want to hear anything more. They had been talking about it, and maybe —yes, that was it. They were afraid he would try to climb up the pylon.

At supper none of them talked about the swallow, but Andre felt it all right. He felt as if it was hanging above their heads and his mother and father felt it and they all had a load on them. Going to bed his mother said to him he must not worry himself about the poor bird. "Not a sparrow falls without our Good Lord knowing."

"It's not a sparrow, it's a swallow," he said. "It's going to hang there all night, by its foot."

His mother sighed and put out the light. She was worried.

The next day was a Saturday and he did not have to go to school. First thing he looked out and the bird was still there. The other swallows were with it, and when they took off it fluttered and made little thin calls but could not get free.

He would rather have been at school instead of knowing all day that it was hanging up there on the cruel wire. It was strange how the electricity did nothing to it. He knew, of course, that the wires were quite safe as long as you did not touch anything else. The morning was very long, though he did forget about the swallow quite often.

He was building a mud fort under the gum tree, and he had to

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carry water and dig up the red earth and mix it into a stiff clay.

When he was coming in at midday with his khaki hat flapping round his face he had one more look, and what he saw kept him standing there a long time with his mouth open. Other swallows were fluttering and hovering around the trapped bird, trying to help it. He rushed inside and dragged his mother out by her hand and she stood too, shading her eyes again and looking up.

" Yes, they're feeding it. Isn't that strange," she said.

" Sssh! Don't frighten them," he whispered.

In the afternoon he lay in the grass and twice again he saw the other swallows fluttering round the fastened bird with short quivering strokes of their wings and opening their beaks wide. Swallows had pouches in their throats where they made small mud bricks to build their nests, and that was how they brought food to it. They knew how to feed their fledglings and when the trapped bird squeaked and cried out they brought it food.

Andre felt choked thinking how they helped it and nobody else would do anything. His parents would not even talk about it.

With his keen eyes he traced the way a climber could get up the tower. Most difficult would be to get round the barbed-wire screens about a quarter the way up. After that there were footholds in the steel lattice supports. He had studied it before.

But if you did get up, what then? How could you touch the swallow? Just putting your hand near the wire, wouldn't those millions of volts flame out and jump at you?

The only thing was to get somebody to turn off the power for a minute, then he could whip up the tower like a monkey. At supper that night he suggested it, and his father was as grim and angry as he'd ever seen.

" Gee! " Andre said to himself. " Gee! They were both white-hot about it."

" Listen, son," his father said. He never said " son " unless he was really mad about something. " Listen, I don't want you to get all worked up about that bird. I'll see what can be done. But you leave it alone. Don't get any ideas into your head, and don't go near that accursed pylon."

" What ideas, Papa? " he asked, trembling inside himself.

" Any ideas at all."

" The other birds are feeding it, but it may die."

" Well, I'm sorry; try not to think about it."

When his mother came to say good night to him he turned his face over into his pillow and would not kiss her. It was something he had never done before and it was because he was angry with them both. They let the swallow swing there in the night and did nothing.

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His mother patted his back and ruffled his white hair and said, "Good night, darling." But he gritted his teeth and did not answer.

Ages seemed to him to have passed. The bird was still hanging on the lofty powerline, fluttering feebly. He could not bear to look up at it. After breakfast he went out and tried to carry on building his fort under the gum tree. The birds were chattering in the tree above him and in the wattles at the back of the house. Through the corner of his eye he saw a handsome black-and-white bird fly out in swinging loops from the tree and it settled on the powerline some distance from the tower. It was a butcher-bird, a Jackey-hangman, a terrible greedy pirate of a bird.

His heart fell like a stone—he just guessed what it was up to.

It sat there on the wire impudently copying the calls of other birds. It could imitate a toppie or a robin or a finch as it liked. It stole their naked little kickers from their nests and spiked them on the barbed wire to eat at pleasure, as it stole their songs too. The butcher-bird flew off and settled higher up the wire near the pylon.

Andre rushed up the path and then took a swing from the house to come under the powerline. Stopping, he saw the other birds were making a whirl and flutter round the cannibal. Swallows darted and skimmed and made him duck his head, but he went on sitting there. Then some starlings came screaming out of the gum tree and flew in a menacing bunch at the butcher-bird. They all hated him. He made the mistake of losing his balance and fluttered out into the air and all the birds were round him at once, darting and pecking and screaming.

The butcher-bird pulled off one of his typical tricks—he fell plumb down and when near the ground spread his wings, sailed low over the shrubs, and came up at the house where he settled on the lightning conductor.

Andre stood panting and felt his heart beating fast. He wanted to throw a stone at the butcher-bird but he reckoned the stone would land on the roof and get him in trouble. So he ran towards the house waving his arms and shouting. The bird cocked its head and watched him.

His mother came out. "Darling, what's the matter?"

"That Jackey, he's on the roof. He wanted to kill the swallow."

"Oh, darling!" the mother said softly.

It was Sunday night and he said to his mother, "It's only the other birds keeping him alive. They were feeding him again today."

"I saw them."

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"He can't live much longer, Mama. And now the Jackey knows he's there. Why can't Papa get them to switch off the electricity?"

"They wouldn't do it for a bird, darling. Now try and go to sleep."

Leaving for school, he tried not to look up. But he couldn't help it and there was the swallow spreading and closing its wings. He quickly got on his bike and rode as fast as he could. He could not think of anything but the trapped bird on the powerline.

After school, Andre did not catch the bus home. Instead, he took a bus the other way, into town. He got out in a busy street and threading down through the factory area he kept his bearings on the four huge smokestacks of the power station. Out of two of the smokestacks white plumes were rising calmly into the clear sky. When he got to the power station he was faced with an enormous high fence of iron staves with spiked tops and a tall steel gate, locked fast.

Andre peered through the gate and saw some black men off duty, sitting in the sun on upturned boxes playing some kind of draughts game. He called to them, and a big slow-moving man in brown overalls and a wide leather belt came over to talk.

Andre explained very carefully what he wanted. If they would switch off the current then he or somebody good at climbing could go up and save the swallow.

The man smiled broadly and clicked his tongue. He shouted something at the others and they laughed. His name, he said, was Gas—Gas Makabeni. He was just a maintenance boy and he couldn't switch off the current. But he unlocked a steel frame-door in the gate and let Andre in.

"Ask them in there," he said, grinning. Andre liked Gas very much. He had in big cloth letters ESCOM done on his back and he was friendly, opening the door like that.

Andre went with Gas through a high arched entrance and at once he seemed to be surrounded with the vast awesome hum of the power station. It made him feel jumpy. Gas took him to a door and pushed him in.

A white engineer in overalls questioned him and he smiled too. "Well," he said. "Let's see what can be done."

He led down a long corridor and up a short cut of steel zigzag steps. Another corridor came to an enormous panelled hall with banks of dials and glowing lights and men in long white coats sitting in raised chairs or moving about silently. Andre's heart was pounding good and fast.

He could hear the humming sound strongly and it seemed to

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come from everywhere, not so much a sound as a feeling under his feet.

The engineer in overalls handed him over to one of the men at the control panels and he was so nervous by this time he took a long while trying to explain about the swallow. The man had to ask him a lot of questions and he got tongue-tied and could not give clear answers. The man did not smile at all.

He went off and a minute later came and fetched Andre to a big office. A black-haired man with glasses was sitting at a desk. On both sides of the desk were telephones and panels of push-buttons. There was a carpet on the floor and huge leather easy chairs.

Andre did not say five words before his lip began trembling and two tears rolled out of his eyes. The man told him, " Sit down, son, and don't be scared."

Then the man tried to explain. How could they cut off the power when thousands and thousands of machines were running on electricity? The trains would stop, hospitals would go dark in the middle of an operation, the mine skips would suddenly halt eight thousand feet down. He knew Andre was concerned about the swallow, only things like that just happened and that was life.

" Life? " Andre said, thinking it was more like death.

The big man smiled. He took down Andre's name and address, and he said, " You've done your best, Andre. I'm sorry I can't promise you anything."

Downstairs again, Gas Makabeni let him out at the gate. " Are they switching off the power? " Gas asked.

" No."

" Mayi babo! " Gas shook his head and clicked. But he did not smile this time. He could see the boy was very unhappy.

Andre got home hours late and his mother was frantic. He lied to her too, saying he had been detained after school. He kept his eyes away from the powerline and did not have the stomach to look for the swallow. He felt so bad about it because they were all letting it die. Except for the other swallows that brought it food, it would be dead already.

And that was life, the man said . . .

It must have been the middle of the night when he woke up. His mother was in the room in her kimono and the light was on. " There's a man come to see you," she said. " Did you ask anyone to come here? "

" No, Mama," he said, dazed.

" Get up and come." She sounded cross and he was scared stiff. He went out on the stoep and there he saw his father in his pyjamas and the back of a big man in brown overalls with ESCOM on them: a black man. It was Gas Makabeni!

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" Gas! " he shouted. " Are they going to do it? "

" They're doing it," Gas said.

A linesman and a truckdriver came up the steps on the stoep. The linesman explained to Andre's father a maintenance switch-down had been ordered at minimum-load hour. He wanted to be shown where the bird was. Andre glanced, frightened, at his father who nodded and said, " Show him."

He went in the maintenance truck with the man and the driver and Gas. It took them only five minutes to get the truck in position under the tower. The maintenance man checked the time and they began running up the extension ladder. Gas hooked a chain in his broad belt and pulled on his flashlight helmet. He swung out on the ladder and began running up it as if he had no weight at all. Up level with the pylon insulators, his flashlight picked out the swallow hanging on the dead wire. He leaned over and carefully worked the bird's tiny claw loose from the wire binding and then he put the swallow in the breastpocket of his overalls.

In a minute he was down again and he took the bird out and handed it to the boy. Andre could see even in the light of the flashlamp that the swallow had faint grey fringes round the edges of its shining blue-black feathers and that meant it was a young bird. This was its first year. He was almost speechless, holding the swallow in his hands and feeling its slight quiver.

" Thanks," he said. " Thanks, Gas. Thanks, mister."

His father took the swallow from him at the house and went off to find a box to keep it out of reach of the cats.

" Off you go to bed now," the mother said. " You've had quite enough excitement for one day."

The swallow drank thirstily but would not eat anything they could think of, so the parents thought it best to let it go as soon as it would fly. Andre took the box to his fort near the gum tree looking out towards the koppie and the powerline. He held the swallow in his cupped hands and it lay there quiet with the tips of its wings crossed. Then it suddenly took two little jumps with its tiny claws and spread its slender wings. Frantically its wings beat the air and it seemed to be dropping to the ground.

Then it skimmed forward only a foot above the grass and he remembered long afterwards how, when it really took wing and began to gain height, it gave a little shiver of happiness as if it knew it was free.

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★ ★ ★

A small boy with diamonds is no match for a large burglar with experience.

ANON

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I give you the toast:

SIR WINSTON

On 11 November 1960—at the start of a new decade—Argosy looks back in salute and proud recognition.
As we remember the war-torn years of this century, when the fate of every man, woman, and child in Britain and in the Commonwealth hung in the balance, our thoughts turn to that one great, pre-eminent personality, Winston Churchill.
In tribute to Sir Winston at this time, Argosy quotes words spoken by Field-Marshal Montgomery at a ceremony at Hastings when Sir Winston was presented with his portrait by the Cinque Ports. The speech I then made, writes Lord Montgomery, explains better than anything else I can say what I feel about Winston Churchill . . .

I HAVE been given the great honour of proposing the toast of the Lord Warden, and nothing could be a greater pleasure. During the late war Sir Winston Churchill was my Chief; as we got to know each other, he became my friend; today he is chief among all my friends.

As Lord Warden he holds the Office of Admiralty within the Cinque Ports.

I would like to remind him that I once served as his

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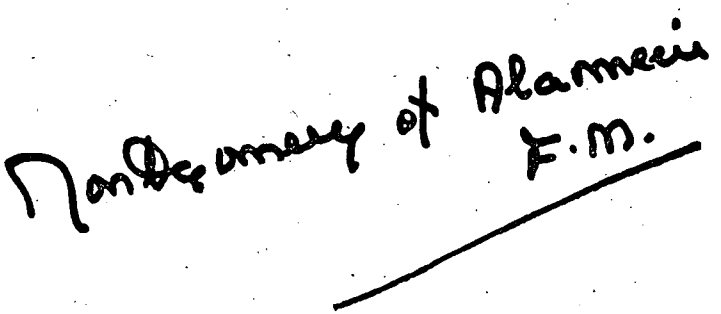
CHURCHILL

Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter
Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports
The greatest Englishman of all time

Proposed by



shipmate in an operation of war, when we crossed the Rhine together in a naval craft in March 1945 and later got heavily shelled for our misdeeds. It was he who suggested we should make the crossing!

The association between the Cinque Ports and Sir Winston Churchill, which has reached so charming a climax today, is singularly appropriate. For what could be more suitable than that the towns which once provided most of the men and ships for the King's

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Navy should know and harbour a "Former Naval Person"? In far off but still memorable days the Ports and their Lord Warden were the active practitioners of that eternal vigilance which is the price of freedom.

In much more recent and even more memorable days, the present Lord Warden showed himself to be the incarnation of the traditional spirit and duty of the Ports. To him more than to any other man we owe the fact that the citadel of freedom was kept inviolate.

This is one of the occasions, I think, on which it is right and proper to break through the reserve of the English heart, and to say in that tongue of which he is so unquestioned a master why it is that his portrait exists not only on canvas but also in the souls of free men throughout the world, and in the souls of many not so free.

First, because he is a Man.

There is not one of us who has had the privilege of sharing his work and his thoughts who cannot say with Mark Antony:

"He was my friend, faithful and just to me."

He has seen, undismayed, truth "twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools."

He has met "with Triumph and Disaster" with equal serenity.

He has filled every "unforgiving minute" with "sixty seconds' worth of distance run."

The capacity to do these things was Kipling's definition of a Man.

He qualifies.

Let me remind you of his own prescription for conduct in the great adventure of life:

In War:	Resolution.
In Defeat:	Defiance.
In Victory:	Magnanimity.
In Peace:	Goodwill.

Surely he has practised what he thus preached.

It may seem strange to some of you to hear a soldier praising a politician! The two professions have not

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always hit it off. Indeed, this politician deliberately abandoned my profession at an early age. I am grateful, because if he had not it might have been he who won at Alamein.

But whatever the soldier may sometimes in his wrath say about the politician, I would exempt this particular one. For he redeemed himself by being often and for long periods the politician who was best hated by other politicians. I am told that some of them called him "turncoat," "untrustworthy," even "lacking in judgment."

How small, how shamefaced, they must feel today? We soldiers think of him as Wordsworth's happy warrior, "that every man in arms should wish to be." I would like to repeat to you some of the lines.

> "'Tis, finally, the Man, who, lifted high,
> Conspicuous object in a nation's eye,
> Or left unthought of in obscurity—
> Who, with a toward or untoward lot,
> Prosperous or adverse, to his wish or not—
> Plays, in the many games of life, that one
> Where what he most doth value must be won."

It seems to me that these words exactly fit Sir Winston. And what is it that the Lord Warden

> "most doth value"?

Here again a soldier finds a kindred spirit in the definition which he himself has given of the aims and purposes of his career:

> "The maintenance of the enduring greatness of Britain, and the historical continuity of our island life."

But we are met to commemorate not only what he did to win wars, but also what he did to prevent them. And therefore I would add what he said only a few years ago:

> "Peace is the last prize I seek to win."

Nobody knows better than a soldier the overwhelming value of that prize—because nobody knows better than a soldier the monster called War.

Nobody knows better than a British soldier how a

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strong Britain and an untarnished British spirit are the prime ingredients of peace.

A few final words about the Lord Warden in one other capacity—that of a national leader in times of crisis. Our British leaders are not "Fuhrers," "Duces," or Cæsars. They are potent, but not potentates; guides, not dictators; too human to pretend to be superhuman. They do not put themselves above the rules. Power does not go to their heads. They receive it with modesty; they lose it with resignation, if not with exhilaration. But when weighed in the balance they are not found wanting.

Never has any land found any leader who so matched the hour as did Sir Winston Churchill.

When he spoke—in words that rang and thundered like the Psalms—we all said:

"That is how *we* feel"

and

"That is how we shall bear ourselves."

He gave us the sense of being a dedicated people with a high purpose and an invincible destiny. There was—there is—a moral magnificence about him which transforms the lead of lesser men into gold; he inspired us all.

He was once good enough to refer to me as a Cromwellian figure, no doubt because I have always tried both to praise the Lord and to pass the ammunition. Let me therefore conclude with the words which Cromwell used about the men whom the State chooses to serve her:

"So that they render good service, that satisfies."

Sir, you have rendered good service.

Sir, we are satisfied.

I give you the toast of:

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter
Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports

The greatest Englishman of all time.

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Ivory Puma

By GEOFFREY HOUSEHOLD

ATLANTIS? It's of more interest to poets and mystics than archaeologists. The lost continent is only a fable. We have no proof. You're looking at the best there is. No, not me. In the case behind my desk.

A puma, you think? Have you just been to the zoo? Well, then, why do you call it a puma rather than a lion or a leopard? Yes, you're quite right. One could swear it was dug up in Peru or Ecuador. But an ivory puma is impossible. No pumas in the Old World. No elephants in the New World.

I'll tell you its history, though I warn you it is very unsatisfactory. It has no ending. You go out where you came in.

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You'll just say to hell with me and Jim Hawkes and all those visionary swordsmen who conquered the Americas and carefully destroyed or displaced every blessed thing they ought to have preserved for us.

But, like all good stories, it is really that of a man's character—a grubby little man with bad teeth and no education who cared as little for money and as much for truth as any dedicated scholar rediscovering the past for the wages of a manual worker.

At first Jim Hawkes was not allowed in when he turned up at the side door of the museum and asked to see me. They thought he had samples in his little bag. That was what he looked like—a salesman peddling cheap pens on commission. Yet there was something honest and earthy about him which was hard to distrust. He was a real cockney, too—with the Londoner's genius for summing up doormen and minor officials and getting his own way in spite of them.

While he remembered to be on his best behaviour he addressed me as "sir." When he got excited he called me "guv'nor." At that first interview he sensibly gave a thumbnail sketch of his background before coming to business, but I can't distinguish between what he said then and all I learnt about him later. It's enough that he had passed twenty years of peace and war as steward on a tramp steamer, married a Portuguese wife, and settled down on her little farm in the Azores.

He was one of those Englishmen—and how common they are!—who consciously loathe industrial civilisation. Most of them haven't the enterprise to get out until they are tied to it. But Jim Hawkes knew an opportunity when he saw one. And the sea had already accustomed him to exile.

Introductions over, he asked me if I believed in Atlantis. He used the right word. It's a matter of belief, not scholarship. I told him gently that we believed in nothing without proof.

"Here it is," he said.

He opened his bag, scattering straw all over the room, and put that Ivory Puma on my desk.

It was like nothing I had ever seen. So far as technique and material went, it might have been a superb Persian ivory of the fifth or sixth century B.C. possibly brought to the Azores by the Carthaginians. But the style was wrong. Too realistic.

I remember thinking it odd that such a marvellous craftsman at carving ivory in the round had been unable to reproduce the strength and majesty of the lion. I know lions. In art, that is. Remind me to give you a copy of my monograph, *Treatment of the Conventional Mane.*

"It's not a lion," Jim Hawkes said. "I think it's a puma."

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I made no comment. I took him across to the American Section and put his ivory alongside our two pre-Inca pumas—one in stone and one in pottery. Jim Hawkes had a case.

When we were sitting down again in my office I asked him how he had got hold of such a curiosity, rather suspecting that he would tell me some unbelievable yarn to cover up the fact that he hadn't any right to it. But no. He was eager—falling over himself—to invite questions. That was why he had come.

He told me that on the Island of Graciosa he had discovered a shallow cave with its entrance nearly hidden beneath sub-tropical vegetation. The floor—part earth, part fine dry dust—was completely undisturbed. On a rock ledge at the back of the cave was standing the Ivory Puma.

He thought at first that it was a child's toy. For all I know, it may have been—though an ivory as large as a half-grown kitten argues a very high level of civilisation in the nursery. Then he realised that it did not belong to our day at all, and his mind at once jumped to Atlantis.

But it would be wrong to think of him as just one of those Lost-Continent-cum-Flying-Saucer sort of cranks. His hobby—and I can't think of a better for anyone living in the Azores—was Atlantis. He knew all the usual arguments for and against. Like so many seamen he was a great reader, though he had left school at the age of twelve. And he had a passion for facts. I tell you, he saw the difference between fact and conjecture a damn sight clearer than some of my colleagues.

"What I want, Mr. Penkivel, sir," he said, "is to 'ave that cave excavated proper-like. Not treasure 'unting! Every cupful of soil sifted by them as knows what's what. And I don't want nothink out of it for meself, and I'll pay the labour."

I asked him why me? Simple. He had turned up at the museum and demanded the bloke who knew most about ivories. Just possibly I am. But I also happened to be the bloke whom the porter was most annoyed with at the moment.

Now, I really must repeat that there is no conclusive evidence for the existence of Atlantis. But as well as a so-called expert in ancient art, I am a Cornishman. Part of us always dips into the ocean with the sun. So when I had taken Jim out to lunch next day and again convinced myself that he was dead straight, I decided I might as well spend the six weeks' holiday which was coming to me in running a trial trench through that cave. I did not tell my colleagues what I intended. They would have thought I needed a holiday even more than I really did.

Like all islanders, Jim knew how to travel cheaply. When he returned to the Azores on a Portuguese cargo boat, I went with

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him—feeling selfconsciously precious and wondering to what sort of society I had condemned myself.

I needn't have worried. Jim's background was in keeping with the man—simple and satisfying. He had a white, single-storied peasant house, three acres of wheat and pasture, and some terraces of fruit and vine which wandered up the hillside. It was one of the highest farms on Graciosa, blazing with sun or hidden under blowing mist half a dozen times a day and looking out over a full semicircle of empty, secretive Atlantic.

All this he had married together with Senhora Hawkes. It was certainly a love match, though it wouldn't have been possible without her inheritance. Maria Hawkes was a peasant poppet, with the face of an angel and the body of Humpty Dumpty.

She, too, had got a bargain by her marriage. Her energetic little ex-steward, always wanting to know why, had doubled the value of her land. They had as yet no children. That allowed Jim his luxury of Atlantis. His excuse for the journey to London had been a visit to his brother, but the Senhora knew as well as I did that his true motive was to explain the ivory.

His cave was on a steep, overgrown hillside, high above their land. The entrance was a horizontal cleft under an overhang of rock, so that it could only be seen by a man climbing up from below, and even then he might not spot it through the bushes for what it was. Beyond the cleft was a roomy, low-roofed chamber which ran back into the hill for seventy feet, narrowing all the way, until the passage ended at a fallen boulder.

It was just the sort of place to have sheltered early man. But the islands were uninhabited when the Portuguese discovered them; so I could not expect to find traces of anything larger than a rabbit. If I did, the historians and geographers would have a good deal of rewriting to do. That was an intriguing thought for a holiday, let alone the fact that I might come across another inexplicable ivory.

I don't normally dig; it's my job to give my opinion of what others have dug. But the cave would have been easy even for an amateur. Right inside, where Jim had made his find, there was only a layer of dust over the bedrock. We sifted all of this. It was quite sterile. I could trust him absolutely with the sieve. When I tell you that he managed to spot a rat's tooth you can imagine how keen he was. Over the rock at the entrance were eight feet of soil, shallowing rapidly, of course, as one got farther into the cave. Through this we drove our trench with the help of two labourers whom Jim had hired.

Meanwhile Maria Hawkes brought up enormous meals of fish and wine on a donkey and loaded the panniers with spoil

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from our dig to put on her pineapples. She couldn't understand our professionally slow, patient progress. But if that was how her man wished to amuse himself, she did not complain. Other wives had to put up with drink or gambling.

For the first week I was happy as any fellow let out of an office can be. At the end of the second I began to get bored. So did the onlookers, who left us for good. We found not a trace of man. The authorities are always right. A pity—except when I am the authority myself.

The only excitement was when one of our cross trenches hit charcoal only two feet above the bedrock. Jim Hawkes was bursting with expectancy and quite silent. He saw what it could mean. So did the labourers. But I had to tell them there was no evidence of a human hearth; it was undoubtedly blown debris from a forest fire. I think I shall go out and look at it again.

Jim wouldn't let me pay for anything and I knew he could not afford to go on. The farm was being neglected; ready money was short after his trip to London; and dear Maria Hawkes had added to the expense by considering it her duty to feed the spectators as well as us.

At the end of the third week I persuaded Jim to give up and dismiss the labourers. I felt like—well, like a doctor telling him he must lose his leg. But it had become quite obvious that excavation was not going to tell us anything of the Ivory Puma.

When the first idle day was over—idle for me—I scrambled up to the cave and of course found Jim already there. He had been up before dawn and hoeing ever since, but he was chipping away with a cold chisel at the boulder which blocked the end of the passage. "Know anything about explosives, guv?" he asked.

I said I did. Not a very likely trade for an antiquarian. But in the war I was a sapper.

"Then 'ow about it? Think we'd be muckin' up the evidence?" Yes. That was what he said. He had the instincts of a born archaeologist.

I told him I was sure there was no evidence to muck up, but that the boulder would take some smashing. It had fallen from the roof recently. Say, two or three hundred years ago. To judge by the narrowing of the cave walls nothing much could be behind it, except a cleft or vent. That had to be there, for an occasional draught of warmish air could be felt at floor level. The air had removed my last, faint doubt of Jim's story. It accounted for the preservation of the ivory—otherwise rather unlikely in the moist climate of the Azores.

There was a wide crack down the middle of the boulder and a useful cavity below it. Doubtfully I told Jim my requirements.

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They didn't bother him. He spoke very serviceable Portuguese and was popular everywhere. He was back the next evening with a keg of oldfashioned gunpowder—excellent stuff for shifting rock—from the island's general stores, this time on my account, and had got fuse and detonators free from the whalers.

He did not mention what we were doing, even to Maria—most women are inclined to be excitable in the presence of explosives—so we had complete privacy. I made a good job of it, although my main length of fuse turned out to be a lot faster than the sample I had cut. I'm not sure whether I shot out of that cave together with the blast or just before it.

When the smoke had cleared, Jim and I opened up the passage. Fortunately—as it turned out—the whole force of the explosion had been directed outwards, showering debris on to our working floor, cracking the rock, but disturbing nothing beyond it. We had still a couple of hours' work with pick and crowbar before we could reduce it to rubble and climb over.

To my surprise the cave had done all the narrowing it was going to do, and continued as a very rough V-shaped passage. I am not enough of a geologist to be sure of its origin. A combination of earthquake and steam pressure, I think.

Keeping the beams of our torches as much on the untrustworthy roof as on the ground, we cautiously followed the tunnel until it ended at an appalling abyss in the volcanic rock. That was where the warm air came from. A steam-heated hell fed by the tricklings-in at sea level or below. We threw down boulders and heard not the faintest sound. The gap was too wide to jump but fairly easy to bridge.

While I was wondering if I could ever pluck up enough courage to cross the homemade bridge which Jim—I knew it—was going to insist on constructing, he gave a shout. He was lying on his stomach examining from a respectful distance the sheer edge of that terrifying drop. He pointed to what he had found. Two shallow grooves for the beams of a bridge had been chiselled out of the rock. Our torches showed two corresponding grooves on the opposite side of the chasm.

I have never been nearer to believing in a drowned continent. Who wouldn't in a place like that? I had quite unjustifiable visions of the very last of the inhabitants clinging to a barren peak which later became the green island of Graciosa, and using the cave as their temple or treasure house. Nothing impossible about the rock cutting. Atlanteans, if they existed, presumably had chisels of bronze or obsidian.

Oh yes, I thought of that! I took some scrapings and dust home in an envelope. No trace of bronze or any metal at all.

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Not conclusive, but in favour of steel. Particles so tiny as those from a steel chisel would have been oxidised and blown away on a breath. The microscope did show a glassy dust like a form of obsidian, but even my Cornish blood refuses to build on that. A thousand to one that it was a natural component of the rock.

Farm work went overboard again. Serious, this time. There was a sudden squall from the south which laid the heavy, over-ripe wheat. Maria wept, but Jim damned the weather and continued to square the ends of two twenty-foot lengths of pine sapling with a shipbuilder's adze so that they would fit the channels. On to these spars we nailed planks from the bottom of an old farm cart. The donkey was busy all day hauling timber up the slope.

By the next evening our bridge was ready. I don't believe we would ever have thrown it across the gap if not for Maria. She had a marvellous head for heights and just laughed at her husband, whose distaste for this beastly brink of nothingness was just as great as mine. But he was far more determined.

The roof of the passage was not high enough for us to stand the spars of the bridge in the grooves and lower the far end by ropes. So we mounted the near end on a pair of wheels and kept up the far end at an angle of forty-five degrees by pulling on a rope. Maria pushed this contraption forward, or acted as brake if we raised it too high. When we finally dropped the bridge into position, axle and wheels went over the edge. We never heard a sound after the first bounce.

Maria greeted the accident with a merry laugh. She was perfectly happy standing a foot from the edge—and, after all, the old wheels weren't worth anything. She strolled about on the bridge with plump unconcern. Jim and I went over it on our hands and knees.

After a few yards the passage opened out into an irregular rock chamber too large for the beams of our torches to explore. The Senhora, becoming the weaker sex again, remained at the entrance with a torch of her own. She didn't like that place at all.

Working our way round the walls, we had just decided that this was the end of the cave with no way out of it when Maria let out a piercing scream. She had sat down with her back against the rock and a pool of light in front of her to keep off the bogeys. She stretched out her left hand to make herself more comfortable and placed it on the face of a corpse.

We rushed across to her.

The dead man was a Spaniard or Portuguese of the early sixteenth century. Body, clothes, and weapons were well

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preserved in the still, dry air. He was on his back, with arms crossed on his chest. He knew he had had it, and laid himself down to die with dignity, trusting in the mercy of God. And there in the dust, undisturbed since his last unsteady steps, were the marks of his loose boots.

He had taken a sword or dagger thrust low down on the side of the throat. I should not have noticed the perforation of the mummified skin if the linen of the shirt had not been dark with dried blood.

It wasn't the expert, the scholar trained to facts and nothing but facts, who saw the vital bearing of a four-hundred-year-old murder on the problem of the Ivory Puma. It was Jim, of course—Jim with his passion for never destroying the record of the past through avoidable carelessness.

"We can find aht what 'appened, Mr. Penkivel, guv," he said. "Spend a bit of time on it and we don't 'ave to be Sherlock 'Olmeses."

He was right. The pointed, rather feminine tracks, though the edges were blurred, were utterly unlike our own and told the story. Two men had crossed the chasm. Side by side they walked to the far right-hand corner of the cave. There the dust was thoroughly trampled and disturbed as if they had been removing something which they carried away. On their way back to the bridge the man walking a little behind had stabbed the other.

The murderer's footprints had been overlaid by ours, and were muddled anyway; but a set of clean impressions which we found pointing to the gap seemed unexpectedly deep and firm. My astonishing collaborator was not content with a "seemed." He measured the depth of the heelprints. No doubt about it at all. The murderer when he left the inner cave was weighed down by his comrade's burden as well as his own.

The movements of the other were equally clear. When he fell forwards he left impressions of his knees and body. About where his neck would have been a patch of dust was caked by blood. Badly wounded or dying, he had then risen to his feet, staggered to the place where Maria had found him, and crossed his hands on his breast.

You see why. Because the trusted companion who had stabbed him from behind made doubly sure of him by destroying the bridge. So he lay down to wait for the end. No weeping and cursing on the edge of that uncrossable abyss for him.

His simple act made me understand the contemporaries of Cortés and Pizarro as no books could. Probably he had the sense to see that the sword had been merciful, that he hadn't long to live. Even so I think that if the corpse had been mine it would have

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been found on the brink of the chasm with arms outstretched.

I could now make a plausible guess at how the Ivory Puma came to be in the outer cave. The murderer, repacking his loot, had got rid of it as an object of no value and inconvenient bulk. But it pleased him. He was a man of the Renaissance. I like to think of him as an Italian. So he stood it on the rock ledge instead of just throwing it away.

We found no concrete evidence of what the valuables had been. Maria with her quick fingers helped us to sift the dust. Nothing. Not even a spilt coin.

But there was no need to drag in Atlantis. Boxes of gold and silver must often have gone astray in those days when the treasure fleets called at the Azores on their homeward voyage from the Spanish Main. The two adventurers, I suggested, could have been removing from the cave a hoard of stolen loot.

Jim did not deny it. He didn't stick to his lost continent. He merely pointed out, as modestly as the more courteous type of Oxford don, that I was ignoring inconvenient facts without explaining them.

" 'Ow about the footprints of the blokes what put it there? " he asked.

I hadn't thought of that. Obviously the prints of the blokes who put it there—whatever " it " was—were not visible at the time of the murder or they would be visible still. So in the sixteenth century they had already been obliterated by slow time. In that case the treasure had been put in the cave long before the Azores were discovered.

By now I was unconsciously treating Jim as an authority. I suspect that my voice echoed through the darkness in a genuine academic falsetto as I tried to answer his question by complicated theories involving draughts of air cut off by the fallen boulder. But I had to admit that the case for Atlantis could not be finally dismissed.

You would have thought he'd have jumped at it, and driven home another point, too—that the chiselled footings we had found suggested a permanent bridge, not the casual construction which would have been thrown across the abyss by two fearless conquistadores hiding or seeking a hoard of loot.

Jim stuck to the evidence, however, and nothing but the evidence. He squatted on the floor sucking his teeth—and then he blew his own beloved Atlantis sky high.

" Them two was puttin' somethink in," he said, " not takin' it aht! "

And he fiddled around some more in the marks of the heels with torch and footrule.

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He was on to the truth. The tracks which led from the entrance to the disturbed corner were deeper than the tracks which led back to the site of the murder. So there it was. The two men *were* putting something in. They did not find a treasure in the inner cave at all. They carried it in across their bridge and dumped it.

Yes, you're right. If that was what really happened, the murderer had to return from his victim to the corner in order to pick up the two loads and make off with them. And his tracks must still be there.

They were. Along the wall all the way. That's why we had missed them. Reconstruction easy. Torch or candle had gone out in the struggle, so the murderer felt his way back to the treasure round the wall. Wounded man also had a pistol—a very fine one for its date—which may have influenced the cautious movements of the other.

"Not what you wanted, Jim," I said. "I'm sorry. But you're a lot better off."

"Fifty-fifty, Mr. Penkivel, sir," he answered sternly.

I knew he must have noticed it. There was nothing his eyes missed, though of course he could not know the value of the emerald set in the pommel of the dead man's sword. Nor could I in the beam of a torch. But it was worth a lot for its extraordinary size even if flawed, as it almost certainly had to be.

I turned his offer down flat. In proportion to his resources Jim had contributed to an archaeological expedition more than any millionaire's fund ever dreamt of. He was entitled to the finds, if any. And then that amazing man reflected doubtfully. "Would yer say we 'ad the right to take it aht, guv? We're 'ere for knowledge, not treasure 'unting."

I assured him that there were plenty of sixteenth-century swords in the world and that this was of no special value except for the emerald set roughly and strongly into the hilt. Safest place to keep it, I suppose. Even when belts and breeches had rotted away those indomitable Spaniards still held their naked swords.

Well, yes, I must admit it was a superb weapon. But I wanted Jim to have the emerald; and I didn't know enough about the Portuguese law of treasure trove to be sure that if he produced sword and emerald as they were he would be allowed the value. Take it from me—state museums don't like paying out when they can get something for nothing.

"O.K., guv'nor," he said. "Sell it for me when yer gets 'ome because I wouldn't know 'ow. And you 'ave the Ivory Puma for the museum."

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Why isn't it on exhibition? I've told you. Because the bloody thing is impossible! It asks us to assume a lost culture with affinities to both Old World and New. Yes, naturally I had it dated by the radio-carbon method. The very large elephant which supplied the ivory died not later than 2000 B.C.

Origin unknown. All we can say. Nothing surprising in that. Every great museum has some lovely thing in the basement waiting for the day when our successors will know enough to be able to label it.

There was nothing else in the cave worth recording. Jim and I decided to leave the body where it was and remove our bridge. Like a couple of idiots we talked of cementing a ring-bolt into the roof so that we could support the far end while we pulled it back. Maria's feminine commonsense dealt with that.

"But why not drop it down the hole?" she asked in her lilting Portuguese. "We can always make another."

It's the end of the story. Unsatisfactory, as I told you, except for Jim. I got him six thousand pounds for the emerald.

The chiselled bridge footings? Well, the romanticist—that's me—finds them so inexplicable that he is re-examining (Keep it to yourself!) the case for Atlantis. The cold-blooded authority—that's Jim—suggested that our two adventurers made a solid bridge because they intended at some later date to bring over a heavy mule-train of stuff which they did not want to risk losing.

Possible, but odd. Remember they only entered the inner cavern once. They never explored it at all while they were building their bridge or afterwards. They carried in their mysterious loot straight away and dumped it. Doesn't that look as if the bridge was already there?

And doesn't it suggest a sudden, hasty decision, not the behaviour of men stacking away valuables in a carefully chosen hiding-place? My own guess is that they found the cave and the treasure at the same time. They didn't know what to do with such wealth, how to ship it and dispose of it. So they agreed to carry it into the inner cave for the moment and perhaps break down the bridge.

Where did they find it? In the outer cave, of course, where it had remained untouched ever since it was abandoned by desperate refugees from the sunken cities of the plain on the lost continent of Atlantis.

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★ ★ ★

Press Agent: a man who has hitched his bragging to a star.

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Witty, piquant, irresistible!
After "The Pursuit of Love,"
"Love in a Cold Climate" comes

DON'T TELL ALFRED

Fanny Wincham's husband, Alfred, former pastoral theologian at Oxford, now unexpectedly appointed Ambassador at Paris, is delighted when on the day before the first official Embassy dinner-party, M. Bouche-Bontemps at last succeeds in forming a government. The great day dawns—and Northey, Lady Wincham's social secretary, is, of course, nowhere to be found. With her big, beautiful blue eyes, liable to brim so affectingly with tears, Northey has much the same effect on Paris as Zuleika Dobson had on Oxford; Presidents, cabinet ministers, seducers, all fall in love with her. Northey is engaged elsewhere . . . diplomatically ensuring that certain watched pots shall not boil.

I REQUESTED Philip Cliffe-Musgrave to come to my bedroom early on the morning of the dinner in order to talk over dispositions. Philip appeared, punctual as always. "Isn't this a mercy!" I said. The morning papers hailed the end of the crisis, giving Bouche-Bontemps a friendly reception.

"Where's Mees," Philip said, "I thought she was to come for orders?"

"Naughty girl. I suppose she's overslept as usual."

"She's not in her room—I banged as I came up the backstairs —nor in the bath, I banged there, too."

"Are you sure? How very odd. I wonder if Katie knows anything?"

Katie of the Embassy telephone exchange, a key figure in our

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by Nancy Mitford

lives, knew everything, as she always did, in her cage and told what she knew with evident enjoyment. Philip listened in to her account with the earphone. It seemed that while Alfred and I had been out the evening before, rushing from the National Day of Iceland to a party for the Foreign Minister of Bali, ending up at a concert at the Costa Rican embassy, a hamper of live lobsters had arrived for me. They were a present from Monsieur Busson, a deputy with a seaside constituency, one of the people invited to our dinner.

The chef, overjoyed, unable to get hold of me, had informed Mees Northey, saying that the menu would now have to be altered. It would then have been Northey's plain duty to send interim acknowledgment and thanks to Monsieur Busson. No such thing.

On seeing the dear lobsters, which were lurching about on the kitchen floor, she flew into a fantigue. She made Katie put her through to the Ministère de la Marine where, strange to say, she had no friend, and asked to speak to the Chef de Cabinet.

Presenting Alfred's compliments she inquired at what point the Seine became salt. The answer was Rouen. She then ordered Jérôme for 8.30 a.m.

When the time came she forced the furious chef to cram the lobsters back into their hamper, and made the footmen load them on to the Rolls-Royce—not in the boot, for fear of smothering the darlings, but inside, on the pretty carpet. By now she was well on the way to Normandy where the sweet creatures would duly be put back in their native element.

"Thank you, Katie." I rang off and looked at Philip, suppressing a giggle as best I could. He shook his head, not very much amused.

"This Northey!" he said. "In the first place the French navy, a thoroughly Anglophobe institution, will immediately assume that we are up to some monkey work. Why should

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Alfred want to know where the Seine becomes tidal, all of a sudden?

"In the second place Busson, who is the new Minister of Atomic Energy, is the leader of a small but powerful group in the Chambre. He is also a famous gourmet. He will be angry and disappointed when his lobsters fail to appear this evening—he may never forgive.

"In the third place, I think it's too irresponsible of Mees to go off like this on the one day when she might be some slight use to you!"

The telephone bell rang: Katie again. "I forgot to say, she took a follower. At least I expect he is one by now—"

"Who?"

"The Chef de Cabinet. She arranged to pick him up at the side door of the Ministry in the rue St Florentin."

"That's quite a good thing," I said to Philip, "at least he'll see for himself she's not spying."

"My dear, they are madly suspicious of Mees—all the ones who aren't in love with her, that is. The sweet lobsters won't reassure them, I can tell you."

"What time should you say she'll be back?"

"Who knows? Rouen is nearly a hundred miles, I think. The Chef de Cabinet will spin it out as long as he can, no doubt. Oh well—it's not as if she'd be much use here, one can't trust her even to put cards round the table, let alone work out the seating. I should have had to do it for you in any case. I'll get on to old Hughie, presently."

"Let's put Monsieur Busson next to Northey so that she can explain about the lobsters in her own words—?"

"And make an enemy for life? He has never been a minister before, he wouldn't at all relish sitting next to your social secretary. We must make her apologise to him before dinner—lucky she's so irresistible to French politicians. Now—business. Let's see who we've got. I suppose I shall have to have Mees—no hope of Grace for me, eh? Talking of Grace, why not ask her to come and give you a hand with the flowers and things? I know she'd love to."

"Philip, what a good idea!"

"Yes, I'm going to telephone now—she'll turn up trumps, you'll see."

He was quite right.

Grace de Valhubert came for me in her motor after luncheon and took me to St Cloud to pick flowers for the party. Valhubert had a property there, just outside the park, an ancient garden on the site of a hunting-lodge which the Germans had destroyed

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in 1870. Here he grew flowers and fruit for his own use. It was a melancholy, romantic spot, especially in the autumn when the dark green leaves of the adjacent woodlands were flecked with yellow and the old fruit trees covered with apples and pears and peaches. Impossible to imagine that one was only ten minutes away from Paris. The flowers that were visible all grew in tubs and stone vases, while those for cutting were planted in regular rows, like vegetables, behind a hornbeam hedge.

" Charles-Edouard hates to see flowers growing in the earth," Grace explained. " Look how the hot summer has brought out the orange blossom and even ripened a few oranges; very rare, in this climate."

Wearing a dark grey linen dress with broderie anglaise collar and cuffs she looked exactly right there, as she always did whatever the circumstances.

She gave me a pair of secateurs with which to cut the old-fashioned roses, lilies, hollyhocks, tuberoses, carnations, fuchsias, and geraniums.

" We'll make a lovely mixture," she said. " Don't they smell better than those you buy in shops? "

" And no nursing-home flowers," I said. " That's rare at this time of year."

" Those horrible gladioli, we don't dream of allowing them. Aren't English autumn flowers too loathsome! "

We snipped away in silence. Presently Grace asked how Les Iles Minquiers were getting on.

" Nothing new, I think. Mr. Gravely comes here next week to see Monsieur Bouche-Bontemps. Partly about the Eels, I suppose."

" Oh, does he? Bringing Angela? "

" No. Wives mustn't come too often because of foreign currency. It seems she was here in the summer."

" So she was. Isn't it mad of the Treasury the way they drive these important politicians to the brothels just for the sake of the few pounds it would cost to bring their wives with them! "

The Chef de Cabinet did indeed spin it out.

Grace and I had done the flowers and done the table and she had gone home to dress when Northey reappeared. She seemed quite unaware of having done wrong and I saw no point in scolding as that particular misdeed was unlikely to recur. Besides, I was longing to hear about her day as much as she was longing to tell.

The sweet lobsters having been returned to their native element, the Chef de Cabinet had told Jérôme to make a little

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detour of about fifty miles which took them to a three-star restaurant. Here they ordered luncheon and then went for a walk in beautiful woods. The Chef de Cabinet, no doubt in an emotional state, had lost his head and ordered homard à l'armoricaine. When Northey discovered that this was French for lobster, and the cruellest sort at that, she was furious; she cried and sent him to Coventry for half an hour. They made it up again, ordered a different luncheon, and got rather tipsy while it was being cooked.

Back in Paris at last, the Chef de Cabinet, unable to endure the parting, put it off by taking her to see Notre Dame. "Though really," said Northey, "when you know the outside you can guess what the inside is going to be like and he made me miss my fitting at Lanvin—"

"Fitting at Lanvin?"

"Didn't I tell you? Monsieur Castillo has offered me Cecil Beaton. Oh, sharpen your wits, Fanny—Cecil Beaton, that heavenly dress with the bobbles."

Our guests assembled under the gaze of King George and Queen Mary. When there is a large dinner at the Embassy it takes place in a banqueting-hall added on to the ground floor by Pauline Borghese. Though by no means beautiful, it is of an earlier date and therefore less catastrophically hideous than its equivalent at the Elysée which so torments the ghost of poor little Madame de Pompadour. The eighteenth-century dining-room on the first floor, with Flemish tapestries painful to a French eye, where we usually had our meals, only holds about twenty people.

When Monsieur Busson arrived, Philip grabbed Northey by the shoulder and steered her towards him, saying that she had something to explain. She took him into a corner and I could see her launching into a pantomime, partly French, partly English, mostly dumb show, tortured expression, and flying hands.

He looked puzzled, though fascinated, and then amused. Finally, to my relief, he burst out laughing. He gathered his colleagues round him and gave a rapid résumé of Northey's statement. "And now," he ended up in English, "these succulent crustaceans are no doubt swimming away to Les Iles Minquiers."

"Swimming!" said Northey, scornfully. "I have yet to see a lobster with fins."

Monsieur Béguin, who was always rather grumpy and more so now that he was no longer Président du Conseil, remarked sourly that these succulent crustaceans were more likely to be boiling

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away, at this very moment, in peasant cottages. Far better for them, he explained in his cold, clipped voice, had they been cooked at the Embassy, because the cottage saucepans would be smaller, the cottage fires weaker, and the agony more prolonged.

Northey was unmoved by this argument. "I could see on their sweet faces when they were bug— I mean making off—that they would never let themselves be caught again," she said comfortably.

Bouche-Bontemps said, "Perhaps Mees is quite right, who knows? The Holy Office forbade the boiling alive of heretics—they tried it once, in Spain, and even Spanish nerves gave way at the sight. Ought we really to subject living creatures to such terrible cruelty in order to have one or two delicious mouthfuls?"

"Monsieur le Président," said Northey, "je vous aime."

"It is reciprocal."

Monsieur Béguin looked like a Nanny whose charges have gone too far in silliness. He said something to Monsieur Hué about the frivolity of les Britanniques being beyond endurance. Monsieur Hué, a goodnatured fellow, replied that while naturally deploring the waste of delicious lobsters, he found the whole thing funny, touching, and plutôt sympathique.

Monsieur Béguin raised his eyes to heaven. His shoulders, too, went up until it seemed as if they would never come down again. He looked round for a partisan, saw that Madame Hué's gaze was also fixed to the ceiling and that she was clearly on his side. They went off together to a sofa where they sat talking very fast, throwing malignant glances in the direction of Northey.

The Valhuberts now arrived, raising the level of looks and elegance. I introduced him to Northey and had the satisfaction of seeing that this wellknown ravager of the female heart fell there and then victim to the charm of Mees. The evening seemed to have begun extremely well; most of the guests, if not all, were there and were getting on famously.

I am always struck by how easily a French party slides down the slipway and floats off to the open sea. People arrive determined to enjoy themselves instead of, as at Oxford, determined, apparently, to be awkward. There are no pools of silence, all the guests find congenial souls, or at least somebody with whom to argue. Even Monsieur Béguin's disapproval had that positive quality which facilitates the task of a hostess; it led to lively talk and a reshuffling of the company.

At this point Northey was supposed to count the guests and let me know if they were all there. However she was so completely surrounded by ministers that I could not catch her eye to

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remind her of her duty. Philip, with a resigned wink in my direction, performed it for her. "That's it," he said, presently.

The door opened. I supposed that dinner was going to be announced and vaguely wondered why by that door and not the one which led to the dining-room. For a moment nothing happened. Then my bearded son David came crabwise into the room, pulling after him a blue plastic cradle and a girl attached to its other handle.

He was dressed in corduroy trousers, a duffel coat, a tartan shirt, and sandals over thick, dirty, yellow woollen socks. The girl was tiny, very fair with a head like a silkworm's cocoon, short white skirt—filthy—swinging over a plastic petticoat, a black belt, red stockings, and high-heeled, pointed, golden shoes.

In the silence which fell as this curious group came into the room I heard a voice—Monsieur Béguin's I expect—saying something about "cet individu de mine patibulaire," and another—Charles-Edouard de Valhubert probably—"pas mal, la petite."

I am always pleased when my children turn up. The sight of them rejoices me, I rush forward, I smile, and I embrace. I did so now. David and the girl dumped the cradle on a precious piece by Weisweiller. He kissed me warmly—oh horrid, scrubbing-brush beard—and said, "Ma, this is Dawn."

Alfred's reactions were not as immediately enthusiastic as mine. With him it is not so much a physical instinct as a matter of principle that makes him welcome the boys whatever the circumstances of their arrival. Our house is their home, their shelter from the stormy blast. If they are naked they must be clothed; if hungry, fed; if the police of five nations are hot on their heels they must be hidden. No questions must ever be asked. Now he came forward and shook hands with his son, giving him a stern, grave, penetrating look.

"This is Dawn, Father."

"How do you do?"

Alfred led Dawn and David round the room, introducing them, while I held a hurried consultation with Philip about fitting them into our dinner.

He said, "Do you really think it's a good idea? They are so travel-stained—" Unfortunately I knew my David far too well to think that the stains had anything to do with travel.

"We can't possibly send them out when they have just arrived," I said. "Alfred wouldn't hear of it."

"There's no room for them here. The table only holds fifty—it would take at least an hour to put in another leaf and re-do it."

"Oh dear, oh dear." I considered a moment. "In that case, Philip, I'm most dreadfully afraid, and too sorry, that you'll have

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to take Northey out to dinner. Go to the Crémaillère—on the house, of course. Do you mind?"

"Yes," said Philip, displeased at this turn of affairs. Though we had not been able to arrange the seating so that he would be next to Grace—he was between Northey and Mrs. Jungfleisch—he had been placed exactly opposite her so that he would be able to look at her all the time and occasionally lean over and exchange a remark. "I mind but I bow to the inevitable."

"What a funny little person," I said, "who do you imagine she is?"

"An heiress, by the look of her."

"How too splendid that would be. Northey—come here—Philip is going to take you to dine at the Crémaillère to make room for David and the young lady."

"Oh goody gum trees!" said Northey, eyes shooting out electricity.

"Yes, darling. And before you go, will you give that baby to Mrs. Trott and ask her to keep an eye on it and also say I want two bedrooms got ready. Then come straight back after dinner, won't you?"

"We will," said Philip.

The spontaneous sound of discontent rising from a dozen French throats as Northey left the room was silenced by the announcement of dinner. When at last I had got the women through the dining-room doors—all holding back politely and saying, "passez, passez," to each other—I led David and the young lady to the places designed for Philip and Northey.

"Why do you put me next my wife?" he said angrily. "This seems most unusual."

"But, dear duck, I'm not a fortune teller. How am I expected to know that she is your wife?" I said to Dawn, "Please forgive me, but we can't do the table all over again. You must simply try and imagine that you are at a city banquet."

She looked at me with huge, terrified, grey eyes, and I saw, what the extraordinary clothes had hitherto prevented me from realising, that she was very pretty. I also noticed that she was pregnant.

I went to my place between Bouche-Bontemps and Béguin. They were already plunged in a violent political discussion; seeing that I was not really present in the spirit they continued it across me. David had Mrs. Jungfleisch on his right. We had asked her because Philip had asserted that it was impossible to give a dinner-party in Paris without her; how thankful I felt now that she had accepted.

With a lack of inhibition which no European woman would

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have exhibited under the circumstances, she went straight to the point. I strained my ears and listened as hard as I could; this was made possible by the fact that, except for my two neighbours, everybody else was doing likewise.

"Your wife is quite beautiful," she said, "is she a model?"

"No. She's a student."

"Indeed. And what does she study?"

"Modern languages."

"How old is the baby?"

"I'm not sure. Not old at all."

"Are you staying here long?" I held my breath at this.

"No. We are on our way to the East."

"I envy you that. Provins and Nancy are at their best in the fall. Such interesting towns. Try and go to Cirey, it's well worth it, and just outside Paris don't forget to stop your car at Grosbois—"

"We haven't got a car. We are walking."

"Walking to Provins? With the baby?"

"The baby? Oh yes, he's coming too. Not to Provins, to China."

"My! That's quite some walk. China—let me see now—after Provins and Nancy—don't miss the Place Stanislas—you can take in Munich and Nuremberg and Prague. I envy you that. Lemberg, they say, has charm. After Moscow there is the holy city of Zagorsk, the tomb of St. Serge in solid silver. Are you looking for a special school of architecture or just going haphazard? By the way, I suppose you have your visas for China. I heard it was none too easy—"

David said they had no visas for anywhere. They were looking for Truth, he added.

"Aren't you afraid you may end up in gaol?"

He said, loftily, that Truth flourished in gaols, specially in Eastern ones.

"We are the bridge," he added, "between prewar humanity with its selfishness and materialistic barriers against reality and the new race of World Citizens. We are trying to indoctrinate ourselves with wider concepts and for this we realise that we need the purely contemplative wisdom which comes from following the Road."

Mildred Jungfleisch now had her clue. As soon as she realised that David was not on an ordinary honeymoon, but was in search of Truth, she knew exactly where she was and how to cope. She dropped the Place Stanislas and Grosbois and brought out such phrases as "Mind-stretching interpretation of the Cosmos," "Interchange of ideas between sentient contemporary human

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creatures," " Explode the forms and habits of thought imposed by authority," " I once took a course in illogism and I fully realise the place it should hold in contemporary thought," " Atmosphere of positive thinking—change is life."

One saw why she was such an asset in society; she could produce the right line of talk in its correct jargon for every occasion. She never put a foot wrong. David was clearly both delighted and amazed to find so kindred a spirit at his parents' table; they talked deeply until the end of dinner. Their neighbours lost interest in the conversation as soon as it moved from personal to eternal issues—the highlight having been the disclosure that David did not know the age of his own baby—and the usual parrot-house noise of a French dinner-party broke out.

As for the student of modern languages, she never opened her mouth. Monsieur Hué, who was next her, tried all sorts of gambits in French, English, German, Portuguese, and Norwegian. She merely looked as if she thought he was about to strike her and held her peace.

I now tried to put these children out of my mind for the present and do my duty as a hostess.

" What does patibulaire mean? " I asked Monsieur Bouche-Bontemps. I thought Monsieur Béguin had the grace to look embarrassed; he turned hurriedly to his neighbour.

" Patibulum is Latin for a gibbet."

" I see exactly."

Monsieur Bouche-Bontemps was very kind and tactful. Instead of abruptly wrenching the conversation in an obvious manner from the subject which was clearly preoccupying me, he began talking about difficult young persons of former days. In seventeenth-century England there were the Tityre Tu, educated gangsters who called themselves after the first line of Virgil's first eclogue. In the 1830s, " the same length of time from Waterloo as we are from Dunkirk," young Frenchmen called Bousingos, like the Tityre Tu, wore strange clothes and committed lurid crimes. I could have wished he had left out the lurid crimes, but I saw the connection.

" I don't know about England," he said, " but in France mothers are frightened of making their children frown. They love them so much that they cannot bear to see a shadow on their happiness; they never scold or thwart them in any way. I see my daughter-in-law allowing everything, there's no authority outside school and the children do exactly as they like in their spare time.

" I am horrified when I see what it is that they do like. They never open a book, the girls don't do embroidery, the boy, though

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he is rather musical doesn't learn the piano. They play stupid games with a great ball and go to the cinema. We used to be taken to the Matinée Classique at the Français and dream of Le Cid—that's quite oldfashioned—it's The Kid now. How will it end?"

"I think you'll find they will grow out of it and become like everybody else."

"Who is everybody else, though—you and me and the Ambassador or some American film actor?"

"You and me," I said firmly. "To our own children we must be the norm, surely. They may react from our values for a while but in the end they will come back to them."

"But these grandchildren of mine are getting so big—they don't seem to change. They still throw that idiotic football at each other as soon as their lessons are over."

"Good for the health, that's one thing."

"I don't care. I don't want them to win the Olympic games. Furthermore healthy children are generally stupid. Those wise old monks knew what they were doing when they founded the universities in unhealthy places. I hate health—the more overpopulated the world becomes, the more people bother about it. Hünde, wollt ihr ewig leben? says I!"

"To your own grandchildren?"

"Specially to them!"

"I don't believe you."

"I am very serious, however. This is a moment in the history of the world when brains are needed more than anything else. If we don't produce them in Western Europe where will they come from? Not from America where a school is a large, light building with a swimming-pool. Nor from Russia where they are too earnest to see the wood for the trees. As for all the rest, they may have clever thoughts about Karl Marx and so on, but they are not adult. If the children of our old civilisation don't develop as they ought to, the world will indeed become a dangerous playground."

I said, "My two grownup boys were perfect when they were little, very very brilliant, longing to learn, all for Le Cid as opposed to The Kid. They both did well at Oxford. Now look at them. Bearded David there, with a first in Greats, if you please, is walking to China in search of Truth. In other words he has given way to complete mental laziness. The other one, Basil, even cleverer, my pride and joy, lies on his face all day on a Spanish beach. How do you explain that?"

"I think they've got a better chance than my poor grandchildren; at least they've some furniture in their heads already."

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" If you ask me they'll all come out of these silly phases. They are nothing new—my cousins and I were quite idiotic when we were young. The only difference is that in those days the grown-ups paid no attention, while we concentrate—too much probably—on these children and their misdoings. How old are yours, by the way? "

" They must be quite seven, eight, and nine by now."

He was very much surprised when I laughed. " At their age," he said, " I was reading the great classics in my spare time."

" We all think that about ourselves, but it isn't always quite true! "

As soon as we left the dining-room, David took his wife away. He explained that they had an important rendezvous at the Alma. " We are several days late—we must go at once."

" But you'll come back for the night? "

" Possibly, or we may sleep there."

" Where? "

" Under the bridge, where we are meeting our friend."

" Oh, don't do that. You must be tired."

" The great Zen Master, Po Chang, said when you are tired. sleep. We can sleep anywhere."

" And the baby? "

" He'll come too. He sleeps all the time. Good night, Ma."

" Shall we see you tomorrow? "

" Possibly. Good night."

Philip and Northey reappeared. Valhubert sprang from his chair beside Madame Hué and in a rapid and skilful manœuvre he whisked Northey to an unoccupied sofa. They sat there for the rest of the evening, laughing very much. Grace, half listening to Philip who had made a beeline for her, looked at them imperturbably, quizzically, even, I thought.

At the usual time and in the correct precedence, the guests came and thanked us for a delightful evening and went their way. I have seldom felt so exhausted. © Nancy Mitford 1960

We know you've enjoyed these chapters. Alas! it was impossible to bring you more. " Don't Tell Alfred " is now published by Hamish Hamilton

TIRS, IDLE TIRS?

The Office du Vocabulaire Français said that *le parking* (car park) should be replaced by *parc de stationnement* or *parcage*; and in sport *le shot*, *le goalkeeper* and *le referee* by *le tir*, *le gardien de but* and *l'arbitre*.

From The Observer

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Oriental Pop

Say, like those wicked Turks, there is no What's-his-name but Thingummy, and What-you-may-call-it is his prophet!

CHARLES DICKENS, *Dombey and Son*

Let Turks Delight—

Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of all that are done in their clime,
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?
Where virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all save the spirit of man is divine?
'Tis the land of the East, 'tis the land of the Sun—
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?

LORD BYRON, *The Bride of Abydos*

Unveiled Innuendo

Her henna'd toes pressed firmly on the centre of a Persian rug of such antiquity as to render the pattern indecipherable; she moved her body from the slender waist downward not at all; the muscles of her arms and shoulders rippled, and her head moved slightly but unceasingly from side to side . . .

And the old Harrovian sitting cross-legged upon a heap of cushions, with the smoke of the nargileh drifting from between his lips, smiled as he picked up the thread of the same old story which had been spun for him when, an arrogant youth of twelve summers, he had ruled his house with no gentle hand.

Otherwise he showed little interest and felt no desire to lift the tantalising veil . . .

"Thou art a beautiful dancer, woman," said Hugh Carden Ali, making no movement to lift the veil. "Behold, I have passed a pleasant hour and

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would reward thee. What thou wilt. Money—jewels?—speak."

From behind the wisp of veil which fluttered in the dancer's quick breathing came the barely whispered answer . . .

"One hour!"

JOAN CONQUEST,
The Passionate Lover

Pearls Before Swine

Ah! seasoned wine oft falls to rawest fools,
And clumsiest workmen own the finest tools;
And Turki maids, fit to delight men's hearts,
Lavish their smiles on beardless boys in schools.

EDWARD FITZGERALD, *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*

Three-speed

On beholding the Sultan Murat's majestic countenance I made obeisance and kissed the ground. The Emperor received me most graciously and, after the usual salutations, asked me in how many hours I could repeat the Qur'an from beginning to end. "Please God," I replied, "if I recite quickly, I can get through it in seven hours; if I do it at moderate speed, that is, neither too quickly nor too slowly, it takes me eight hours."

. . . He thereupon made me a present of two or three handfuls of gold coins—six hundred and twenty-three pieces in all.

A. PALLIS, *In the Days of the Janissaries*

Propheteer

The sons of the Prophet are valiant and bold
And quite unaccustomed to fear;
And the bravest of all was a man, so I'm told,
Called Abdullah Bulbul Amir.

When they wanted a man to encourage the van,
Or harass the foe from the rear,
Storm fort or redoubt, they were sure to call out
For Abdullah Bulbul Amir.

ANON

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Straight-laced

In short it [the bath] is the Women's coffee-house, where all the news of the town is told, scandal invented, etc. They generally take this diversion once a week, and stay there at least four or five hours, without getting cold by immediately coming out of the hot bath into the cold room, which was very surprising to me. The lady that seemed the most considerable among them, entreated me to sit by her, and would fain have undressed me for the bath.

I excused myself with some difficulty. They being, however, all so earnest in persuading me, I was at least forced to open my shirt and show them my stays; which satisfied them very well; for, I saw, they believed I was locked up in that machine, and that it was not in my power to open it, which contrivance they attributed to my husband.

LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU, 1689-1762, *Letter*

Swop Shop

For a mole on the cheek of my darling
Which the breezes of Shiraz have fanned,
I would gladly surrender Bukhara
Or give back to its Khan Samarqand.

JOHN CHARLES EDWARD BOWEN, *Poems from the Persian*

The Censored Sex

At Sir Gore's audience of leave, he begged the Shah graciously to tell him what was the number of his children, that he might give his own monarch correct information on so interesting a subject, provided, as was probable, he should make any enquiry.

"A hundred and fifty-four sons," replied the Shah.

"May I venture to ask your Majesty how many children?"

The word daughter, according to the rules of Oriental etiquette, he dared not pronounce; and indeed the general question was, according to Persian notions, almost an offence. The King, however, who liked Sir Gore very much, did not take it ill. "Ha ha! I understand you," said he laughing; and called to the chief of his eunuchs, "Musa, how many daughters have I?"

"King of kings," answered Musa, prostrating himself on his face, "five hundred and sixty." When Sir Gore Ouseley repeated this conversation to the Empress-mother in Petersburg, she only exclaimed, "Ah, le monstre!"

SARAH AUSTIN, *A Regency Visitor*

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NEED TO KILL

In a blazing fury she sank her teeth into his fist

BY VICTOR FRANCIS

THE INDIAN seated her in a wicker chair on the porch of the wooden house, said, "No move—senhor come," and padded across the clearing.

Anna Gersler leaned back carefully, the chair creaking, and looked after him. From this distance he might have been a Spanish peasant or an Italian fisherman, in his loose shirt and torn cotton trousers. But, close to, the Indian had been unmistakably revealed by the cheekbones and the low-hanging, massively-pierced ear-lobes, looking naked without their usual ornaments. She remembered the shiver that had passed through her a few minutes ago when he had helped her down from the tiny plane and she had found herself looking into eyes that were flat, one-dimensional, without any depth or hint of feeling.

Already the plane was unloaded and a raggle-taggle bunch of Indians was humping sacks of rice towards some outbuildings. As she watched, the single engine roared and the plane jolted over the strip burnt out of the jungle. It barely seemed to clear the wall of trees; then banked precariously and diminished into the wide sky.

As the sound of its engine faded, she became aware of the nearer noises—nearer than the clacking tones of the Indians as they gossiped beneath their loads. This was a deeper hum of voices—European from their cadence, although she could not distinguish any words—and they came from inside the house. The chair groaned as she stirred, and drowned the sound for a moment. Then, violently, a door burst open and a man stumbled through. He stood with his back to her and poured a stream of curses into the room.

A lower voice, taut with anger, answered him from the inside shadow, "Get out, Krass. Get out of my territory and stay out. You can keep the food you've stolen, but you don't get an ounce more. And if you value your stinking skin, keep away from my Indians."

The man called Krass—burly, bearded, shirt stained with

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sweat—lurched down the three steps of the porch and picked up a rifle that was leaning against the rail. The gun swung horizontally in his right hand as he turned to face the man who appeared in the doorway. "Suppose I *take* a sack of rice, Leighton," Krass said, the gun steadied now, its black snout ominous.

Anna Gersler sat very still, moving only her eyes from one man to the other. Neither had paid any attention to her.

The man in the doorway did not stir. "Save your ammunition for game," he said. "You'll need it."

Anna sensed a movement behind Krass. He was saying, "I think I *will* take a sack of rice, Leighton. And I think I'll put a bullet in your guts if you try to stop me."

Several things happened quickly. Krass swung the rifle up in a short arc to his shoulder. There was a swift blur as the Indian who had greeted Anna Gersler moved in, a long club held above his head.

There was a shout from the doorway, "Ramon!" and a slight falter in the Indian's movement which caused the club to miss Krass' head and crash on his shoulder. A bullet snarled into the vacant sky as the rifle dropped from his hand and he fell, moaning.

The Indian raised his eyes blankly as Leighton moved swiftly towards him. Anna Gersler could not understand a word of the Indian dialect that poured from Leighton, but she understood the tone and the gestures of scalding fury, and the Indian cringed.

Leighton picked up the gun and ejected the cartridges. He weighed them in his hand for a moment; then bent and shoved them in Krass' pocket. He dragged up the bearded man by his shirt, applied a boot to his seat and pushed him off. He flung the rifle after Krass. "I told you to get out and stay out," he said. "And the next time you use that gun I won't be around to pick up the pieces."

He stared after Krass until the bulky figure disappeared into the trees; then he walked swiftly up the steps and into the inner room.

Now Anna Gersler permitted herself to move, and the chair protested loudly. Leighton appeared again in the doorway. He looked at her steadily. "Who the hell are you?" he asked.

It took Tom Leighton some time to get over the surprise of finding that the Dr. Gersler who had been assigned to him for six months was a woman.

He paced the room in silence, and at last he burst out, "But dammit, I ordered a man."

"You speak as though you were ordering a piece of equipment," she said.

"That's right! A piece of equipment that does what I tell it

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and nothing else. That doesn't think, doesn't talk, doesn't eat until I tell it it's hungry. A piece of equipment that'll do a well-defined job for six months and then get the hell out of it back to the coast."

He pulled open a drawer of a filing cabinet, a drawer marked MISCELLANEOUS, took out a bottle of gin and one glass, poured a large measure, and replaced the bottle.

" Mr. Leighton," said Anna, " there is really no need for you to regard me as a woman. I promise you the fact will be in no way obtrusive. I shall be happy to obey your professional instructions. I will trust you to feed me when I am hungry, and I dislike polite conversation. I have also brought my own gin."

He pulled out the drawer again and plonked the bottle and a glass in front of her. " I will repay this later," she said evenly, pouring a small measure. " I can also assure you that I am as good a doctor as many men. Dr. Gonzalez would not otherwise have sent me."

" Dr. Gonzalez! What the jacaranda does he know about it—sitting on his outsize, linen-clad buttocks in the best clubs on the coast and preparing cosy little statements for the newspapers! "

" He is, after all, the Minister for Primitive Peoples."

" Minister for primitive fancy-pants! What did he tell you the job was? Eh? What did he tell you? "

Tom Leighton had one large lock of mid-brown hair that was dented by a wave and when he got angry it flopped over his right eye. Now it was flopping, and he pushed it back with a gesture that reminded Anna of a small boy. A rather petulant boy, she thought, as Leighton went on, " I suppose you saw yourself in glamorous white slacks, placing a cool hand on the head of a grateful Indian, feeding pink pills to his pregnant princess, and then coming back for a quiet gin and tonic with that rude Tom Leighton . . . whom, of course, you would reform; who would start shaving for dinner, and duly tell you what a ministering angel you are! You lilies from the coast make me sick! "

There was a clang as he slammed the filing cabinet after pouring himself another drink. Then another clang as he pulled it open again and put the bottle in front of Anna.

Suddenly she leaned forward and said, " Do you really want to know what Dr. Gonzalez said? You are apparently a blunt man, and I shall be equally blunt. Dr. Gonzalez said, ' Please, Anna, do not go. You will be in for six months of hell. The jungle, the climate, the Indians—all those you can take. But six months alone with Leighton . . . no woman should face it! The man is a pig and a boor and a dragon. He is coarse and

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ill-mannered and selfish and anti-social.' You look pleased, Mr. Leighton."

The deep lines that gullied down either side of Tom Leighton's mouth had eased, and there were the intimations of a grin. "Well," he drawled, "that's the first time old Gonzalez has been right about anything."

"He also said," Anna went on, "that if you were not such a genius with the Indians, you would have been replaced long ago. And he said that you would undoubtedly be killed soon, and that might be sad."

Leighton was scowling again. He half grunted an expletive which Anna felt she should not have recognised, and said, "You can get killed by a taxi in Manhattan or Piccadilly Circus."

"Dr. Gonzalez said that you were in control of a vast territory of South America which no white man had penetrated before you, and that you refused to carry firearms. He said that such foolhardiness could have only one end."

Leighton stopped his restless pacing and looked at her squarely. "Dr. Gersler," he said, "there are a lot of ways of dying out here. But I'm a man who takes a helluva lot of killing. I'll stay alive. You just keep my Indians alive. You can start tomorrow morning by spraying some insecticide over the huts in the clearing here—if it doesn't offend your dainty nostrils too much. Ramon will show you your room. Good night."

It was a long time before Anna Gersler could find the brief oblivion of sleep. The grubby mosquito net, the muted cacophony of night sounds from the surrounding jungle, the oppressive sense that the jungle itself was crowding in on her bare room, all conspired to produce a thought-tormented restlessness.

"It is no place for a woman," Dr. Gonzalez had said; then with intuitive wisdom he had added, "and that, I suppose, is why you are determined to go there."

No place, no place . . . a woman, a woman . . . She had become a woman when she was fifteen, when Budapest smoked and crumbled as the Germans retreated and the Russians advanced. The Danube had been choked with corpses, her parents among them, and she had stumbled blindly over the rubble, her fists uselessly in her ears against the noise of the guns.

She did not even know what uniform the soldiers wore. There were two of them, and one had torn off her wristwatch and the other's fingers had been coarse at her throat, his weight massive upon her, and afterwards he left her there, beaten and bleeding in the dust.

Later, a nightmare later when order had been restored and

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the new masters found out who her father had been, they had executed two soldiers. She had not even recognised them, but she had not protested.

And the State had made its restitution. Her education had been paid for and she had qualified and joined the big hospital. She had been efficient and coolly attractive—and her emotions had been utterly anaesthetised. For ten years no man had been able to touch her—until slowly, patiently, lovingly Janos had brought her bruised heart to life.

Anna groped under the mosquito net for a cigarette and as the match flared she seemed to see again for a moment his tired, fond face, his square hands as he touched her for the first time, his steadiness as she flinched, his love as he showed that he understood. "Dear God," she murmured, "is there nothing?" For in her mind's eye the picture changed.

She remembered the intoxication of the students' rising, the wild hopes when the flame grew into rebellion . . . and the numb horror when the Russian tanks rolled through Budapest again. A building had been shelled, and Janos had grabbed his doctor's bag and run across the square, ducking and weaving as the bullets whined like hornets.

Every fibre of her body had longed to run with him; but she was helpless and motionless. The muscles of her legs strained, but she could not move, and she pressed her fists into her ears as once she had as a girl of fifteen and stared blankly at his fast-moving figure. And when the bullets hit him, it was as though her own body felt the shock.

They were not even able to recover his corpse, but they got her across the frontier into Austria, and then the sad odyssey after oblivion began again.

A hospital in Lyons . . . a children's home in Geneva . . . the introduction to Rio . . . and now this: temporary medical assistant to a bitter Englishman who was in sole charge of an uncounted number of near-savage Indians in a mapless chunk of South America as big as her poor Hungary.

No place for a woman, she thought wryly. No place . . .

Tom Leighton had left when Anna woke, but he had ordered Ramon to look after her. The Indian spoke a smattering of Portuguese and a few words of English and, as he accompanied her to spray the noisome huts with insecticide, she asked, "Senhor Krass, with the beard, yesterday, who is he?"

"He from seringueiros—bad, bad."

"Seringueiros? That is . . .?"

"Civilizados. From far river." He pointed vaguely north. "Kill Indian. But always in the end—Indian kill."

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"Indians do not kill Senhor Leighton?"

Ramon did not bother to answer. "Senhor Leighton carries no gun," she persisted. "That is dangerous?"

"Senhor Leighton is one," Ramon answered. "Indians are many. Txukhahamae, Xavante, Kamayura, Miahao—many, many tribe. Gun make no difference." He thought for a moment and added, "If Senhor have gun, mebbe Indian kill him to get gun. All same."

She ate alone that night, and again the next day, for still Leighton had not returned. She had sprayed the huts and treated the sores of the few Indians about the clearing; and now she did not know what to do and time hung heavily. She turned again to Ramon, sensing that Leighton would not have left her in his charge if the Indian could not be trusted. "Will the Senhor be long away?"

He shrugged. "Quem sabe? The forest is great. The civilizado Krass may go far."

"Krass? The senhor follows him?"

To Ramon it was obvious. Krass was bad: therefore Senhor Leighton tracked him to prevent him doing bad things to the Indians. To Ramon it was also stupid: if the senhor had not intervened on the day Anna arrived, Krass would have been dead from the war club.

Anna had taken refuge from her loneliness in Leighton's office. There was an ancient, hand-wound horn gramophone and she found one record, covered with dust, under the filing cabinet. It was a Schubert impromptu, played by Schnabel; and as she sank back in a chair, her eyes closed to listen to the mellifluous sound, tiny tendrils began to curl in her mind and take her thoughts back to Europe.

Suddenly the outer door slammed, and Tom Leighton strode across to the machine and snapped it into silence. He frowned with anger and immediately Anna was icily back in the present.

"I apologise, Mr. Leighton," she said. "It is, of course, unpardonable of me to touch your possessions, but I assure you that—"

Leighton was swaying and his voice was husky. "Goddammit, woman, is nothing sacred?" Then he seemed to stumble. He groped uselessly for the support of the filing cabinet, missed it, and collapsed.

By the time Ramon had run into the room, Anna had made a swift examination. "The senhor is exhausted—much, much tiredness," she explained. She gave Leighton an injection, put him to bed like a child, and told Ramon to summon her as soon as his master woke.

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It was eight hours before the call came; and then, because she knew her man, she waited another half-hour before going to his room. He had shaved and dressed, and was sitting on the edge of the bed. The words cost him a visible effort. "I'm sorry about all that, Dr. Gersler. And thank you."

"There is nothing to be ashamed of in fatigue, Mr. Leighton."

"No," he said. "But I appreciate your realising that I was just damn tired, and not trying to make a patient out of me."

"I know the signs when a man has had no sleep. I have seen it often."

"In Budapest?"

She nodded. "How did you know?"

"You don't think I'd have anybody out here unless I checked on their qualifications, do you?"

For some reason, Anna took offence at his tone. She knew it was irrational, but she was angry as she answered, "I am here as a doctor. If it is necessary for my past to be pried into, if you doubt my qualifications, I would sooner leave."

Leighton rose. "You *are* here as a doctor and you're here for six months. I've already thanked you for doing your job. Don't expect me to apologise for doing *mine*."

"I expect no apologies," she flared.

"And you'll get none from me." He controlled himself and added, "But you'll get a drink. Here—"

Anna felt she could afford to join in the thaw a little. "While we are talking of apologies, please forgive me for last night. It seemed such a little thing."

"It was," he said. "But when a man is tired, a little thing, the wrong little thing, can . . ."

"That lovely music. In spite of your old record, it took me back to Europe for a moment."

"Some of us," he said, "don't want to be taken back."

Overlaying Leighton's mood as they drank, Anna sensed a shadow. She guessed he would not have unbent had there not been a greater problem on his mind; and, deciding that she was being a doctor rather than a woman, she encouraged him to talk his way towards his worry.

He told her about his work. He was officially an Indian Protection Officer. "And that," he explained, "means just what it says. Protecting the Indians. Until a few years ago they were regarded as vermin and white men had a free hand to shoot them on sight. Mind you, the Indians were savages and they would kill any stranger—but, hell, is that any reason why we should be savages too?"

Slowly the Indians had been pacified, slowly the prospectors

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had been compelled to treat them as something more than vermin. Except here, in the farthest fastnesses of the forest. Here was the last untouched part of the continent, the part that was blank on the maps; the part from which no white man before Leighton had returned. He had fought his way through the jungle to found his settlement, which was supplied by air. And from this base he slowly, peacefully made contact with the tribes.

"And then," he said, "one of those damned seringueiros can undo in a day the progress I've made in months."

"Ramon told me that Krass was one of the seringueiros. What are they?"

"Poison," he said. "Tragic, pathetic, doomed—but pure poison if they get to my territory. They're the driftwood from the face of the earth, hired by the big combines to tap wild rubber from the trees in the jungle. Thev're carted up north, and before they can start work they have to buy a gun, a knife, clothes, food, pans from the company store. It costs them four times the market price and they're loaned the money in advance of their pay.

"Off they go into the forest for six months. Then you see them canoeing their rubber back to headquarters. And what do they find? That their pay for the rubber isn't nearly enough to pay off their debt to the company. So off they go for another six months. But first they need more food, ammunition, clothes—and so the vicious circle goes on."

"But can they never pay off the debt?"

"Never."

"Well, why don't they leave?"

He laughed shortly. "Because the only sure way out is by boat, and the boss owns all the boats! The alternative is to do what Krass must have done—stick a knife in one of the guards and try to walk out . . . knowing that you're an outlaw and can be shot on sight; knowing that any Indian will get a reward for bringing in your head."

"It can't be true," Anna interrupted. "Not in these days."

"I'm afraid it is," he said. "The clock stands still up here. Sometimes I think it's being put back. I feel sorry for devils like Krass—that's why I let 'em go if they behave themselves in my territory. They're doomed. But they know it, and sometimes the knowledge makes them murderous. They have nothing to lose."

He brooded in silence, and Anna asked, "Is that what you fear? That Krass might start trouble with the Indians?"

"He's started it. I'm too late. I tracked him out of here,

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but I was nearly a day behind. He put down poisoned food outside one of the villages—"

Anna gasped, "Oh no!"

"He'd shot some game, poisoned it with crushed root, and then hid up while the Indians came out to sample his peace offering! When they were all dead or dying—it was only a tiny encampment of Aweti—he took what he wanted from their huts and pushed on. Like a fool, I stopped to help the survivors. By the time I had finished, his track was gone."

"And now?"

"The Indians will pick up his trail. As soon as they know—I'll know."

"Will they kill him?"

He shook his head. "I've passed word that there'll be a reward for information—but not if Krass is killed."

"And then?"

"Depends where he is. I'll probably bring him back."

The words were spoken softly, casually, and Anna shivered.

"Time you had a sleep," said Leighton. "None of this need bother you."

That night Anna slept restlessly. Once when she woke the light was still burning in Tom Leighton's room, and through the night came the sound of a Schubert impromptu, played on the old record . . .

It was Ramon who woke her in the morning, chattering excitedly, and she had to calm him before she could unscramble his Portuguese-English. She gathered that Leighton had news of Krass, and she found the Englishman in his office, stuffing medical supplies into a kitbag. "It's worse than I thought," he said. "Krass is in a village of the Kamayura tribe. And he has flu!"

Leighton said the words so dramatically that Anna burst into laughter. He did not laugh and he was not angry.

"Dr. Gersler," he said, "the Kamayura have never seen any white man except me. They have never known the white man's diseases. Therefore they have no resistance. Influenza is disastrous out here. Krass' flu can wipe out that entire tribe just as surely as if he mowed them down with a machine-gun."

"Of course," Anna said. "I'm sorry. We must leave at once."

He raised an eyebrow. "We?"

"Surely that is what I am here for."

Leighton spoke slowly, as if to a child. "We have three days of travelling through country that would be described as the worst in the world if anyone else had been there to make the

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comparison. When we arrive we shall find a bunch of naked savages, half of them dead and the other half so damned apathetic and fatalist that they will spit out your medicine. They will not appreciate a ladylike bedside manner.

"And if Krass sees us before we see him, we'll both end up with a bullet in the back. A doctor would be a help—but a woman would be more trouble than she's worth. I go alone."

Anna snapped, "I am employed by you as a doctor—as a doctor I intend to come with you."

He stared for a moment; then decided. "Fair enough. Wear the toughest pants and boots you've got. I've packed the medical kit. Ramon will bring a hammock for you. Here—you'll want this." He handed her a machete.

"We've got an easy walk to the river; then about a day by canoe. Then, I reckon, about two days' footslogging through the forest. You'll need that to cut your path . . ."

The canoe was hollowed from a massive tree-trunk, and an outboard motor was fixed to one end. As it chugged along the broad river highway an extraordinary encyclopedia was opened to Anna's eyes. Baby crocodiles slept by the banks, once a ten-foot anaconda glided by, and turtles popped their heads up like something at a sideshow.

"The thing to do," Leighton explained, "is to dive in and catch 'em by the leg," and she did not dare ask if he was joking.

Anna had been surreptitiously studying their possessions, piled in the canoe, and after high noon she could keep silent no longer. "We don't seem to have brought any food," she said.

Leighton roared, "We live off the country here!" He spoke a few words to Ramon and the Indian cut off the motor; then, as the canoe drifted, he stood poised in the prow, a bow in his left hand, a wooden arrow held loosely in his right. He gazed down into the water.

In one swift movement both arms came up, the arrow was fired, and he was into the water after it, his heels kicking. He emerged clutching a fish, its side as big as a dinner plate. Leighton helped him back into the canoe, and the Indian shook the water out of his shirt and trousers as if he had been a dog.

"Voilà," said Leighton. "Lunch!"

"Wasn't that an unnecessary risk?" Anna asked. "I was warned there were piranha in these rivers."

Leighton snorted again. "The cannibal fish. I know. Staple ingredient of all the adventure writers who've never seen one in their lives."

"But I was told they would strip a man down to a skeleton in seconds."

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" So they can. But only if they've tasted blood first. Without that they'll never attack—you can scare 'em off by shouting." He grinned at her infuriatingly. " I suggest you let me worry about the risks—it's my job. Remember? "

As they chunted down the river after lunch, Anna thought about Tom Leighton. She had to admit to herself that she found his jungle lore fascinating; and she admitted as much to him that night when they built a fire on the bank and prepared to settle down.

" It's like anything else, I suppose," he said. " If you're given a job to do, you find yourself doing it as well as you can—even out here. That's my trouble. It was the same in the war."

He stopped talking abruptly, rose, and silently arranged a hammock for her. She watched as he spread banana leaves beneath it. " Whatever are they for? " she asked.

" Call it a burglar alarm," he grunted. " Nothing can get to your hammock without treading on those leaves—and they'll set up the heck of a rustle. So even you should be safe."

He walked back to the fire and unrolled his sleeping-bag. But he did not get into it. He sat gazing into the flames, and the firelight silhouetting his figure was the last thing she saw before sleep claimed her.

A hand gently touched her wrist, and Anna Gersler struggled back to consciousness. She opened her eyes. And she screamed.

Standing by her hammock was a nut-brown figure, naked but for a tiny apron at his loins. Piercing each ear was a red, white, and black toucan feather, slanting down across the high cheek-bones. Anna screamed and screamed and somehow tumbled out of the hammock in her efforts to get away from the motionless and silent savage.

She realised that her screams had become whimpers, and Leighton's arms were about her, and he was making soft soothing sounds as if to a child wakened from a nightmare. Desperately she fought to control herself, and suddenly she felt furious at her weakness. She tried to compose her features, uncomfortably aware that her cheeks were wet, as Leighton's words began to make sense.

" I've only seen Ramon in his camp clothes," she said with dignity. " How was I to know he had turned savage again? " And then, as her eyes caught Leighton's, she burst into laughter and he joined in.

" So much for your burglar alarm," she said.

" So much for your light sleep! " he replied.

At the same moment they both realised that his arm was still

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round her as they half knelt on the leafed ground beneath her hammock. Awkwardly he rose. " I should have warned you," he said. " Ramon insists on dressing the part while we're in the deep forest. But you'll find he's just as trustworthy a servant as ever. And anyway—" he smiled—" you'll soon get used to the sight of a man's body again."

The forest was a new world again to Anna. Near the river a slime of fungi and creeping tendrils of poisonous liana filled her with a revulsion that she had to fight to conquer. But as the tiring day wore on, she learnt to see with the eyes of Leighton. The crowding trees limited visibility to five or six paces and she learnt to look, not ahead but up and down to see the shadow of an animal, the flutter of a bird, and to glimpse the flash of purple and crimson of an orchid high in the drab green wilderness of trees.

" Why are so many of the saplings broken? " she asked.

" Good God, woman," he exploded, " don't tell me you're getting some forest sense? " And he explained that Krass had marked his path by snapping off young trees to lessen the danger of marching in a circle.

Suddenly there came a cry from Ramon and he stopped in his tracks. She followed his pointing finger and saw a foot—thin and black and crawling with ants—sticking out from the undergrowth. She bent to investigate, but Leighton's hand fell on her shoulder. " Leave it," he said harshly.

" But—"

" Leave it! That one's dead. It's the living we've got to worry about."

She was about to speak again, but he clapped a hand over her mouth and they stood rigid. His head twisted warily; his mouth was open—already she knew that you could hear better by breathing through your mouth—and his eyes darted from tree to tree. She felt humiliated and acutely uncomfortable, standing there gagged. She could not breathe and his hand hurt, and all at once her control snapped. In a blazing fury she sank her teeth into his fist. Even then he did not utter, but as his body jerked she pushed herself free.

The arrow whispered between them and quivered into a tree. Ramon raised his rifle and fired—but he must have missed, because a black shape hurtled towards him from the undergrowth.

So deliberately that his movement seemed almost slow, Tom Leighton drew his machete, stepped forward, and crashed the flat of the blade on the intruder's skull. He hauled Ramon off and spoke sharply to him. " God, if I can ever stop these Indians

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killing each other I'll consider I've done a good job," he muttered. Then he turned to Anna, " I won't ask you if you were lucky or if you saw something—but thanks, anyway."

She was shaking and, if he noticed, he ignored it. She looked at the arrow; and her mind registered, almost as a detached and impersonal fact, how death could come silently in this forest.

Leighton was reviving the Indian. With a calm patience the Englishman questioned him and confirmed a suspicion that Krass had slain the Indian's companion. Leighton must have explained that he, too, was an enemy of Krass; and he sent the Indian off with the machete as a present.

It was dusk when Leighton had finished, and already Ramon had collected tortoise eggs and cooked mandioca pancakes over a campfire. When they had eaten, Anna realised she was dog-tired. Through half-closed eyes she watched Leighton cleaning Ramon's shotgun. " It's a .24 bore—wicked old thing," he said.

" You seem to handle it with almost a loving care."

He looked at her sharply. " I should do. I learnt to shoot when I was a boy in the Norfolk marshes. I learnt a lot better in the war. They gave me medals for it."

Anna roused herself and asked, " You had a bad war? "

" Any war is a bad war. It's just that mine was more personal than some. I never had the long-distance pleasure of dropping a bomb or firing a shell. I used a rifle if I was lucky—a knife if I wasn't."

He stared into the fire and spoke almost to himself. " You join up at eighteen and you learn to do the job well—so very well. Cloak and dagger stuff, the newspapers call it, and it sounds romantic. Until you're told to remove a counteragent, and you find it's a woman, and she cries, and you kill her. Until the next code message comes through and they say it was all a mistake; they got the name wrong; it wasn't the girl after all. Until you get caught yourself, and you sweat it out behind the wire for a year, and you get time to think."

" Perhaps you were lucky to have time to think. I never let myself think. I just . . . froze . . . inside."

" I don't like to talk about it."

She said, " And so you thought you would make some crazy kind of restitution—come out here and do some good, and probably get killed in the process. Slow suicide . . . Is that why you never carry a gun? "

" That's probably the truth. I tell myself it's because I swore, in that prison camp, that I'd never take another human being's life. Who knows the truth? We cannot know our motives. We know only what we do."

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He strode over to Ramon to return the gun.

It was still dark when Anna woke, and this time Leighton called her. She looked at her watch. "But it's only two a.m."

"Sorry—but this last part of the trail will be the most difficult to follow, and we can do it better by night."

"Really, Tom, isn't that carrying jungle lore a bit too far?" She had used his Christian name without thinking, and he gave no sign of noticing.

He simply explained, "A hard trail is easier to pick up by night in this country. By day you depend on your eyes, and they're too easily deceived. By night, feet as skilled as Ramon's can feel out where the grass has been trodden."

And eerily, uncannily, her hand on Leighton's shoulder like a blind woman's, she followed him and Ramon through the night. She was very tired, and sometimes she seemed to sleep as she walked. Then—after perhaps two or three hours—she saw a pricking of light in the blackness ahead. There was another, and another; like fireflies, except that their movement was steady.

"Kamayura," said Leighton. "The reception committee!"

The lights came nearer. Then some of them seemed to split up, and she realised they had formed a circle. The circle contracted, and she gave a start as the darkness was finally pierced. Standing round them were ten naked Indians, each carrying a torch of blazing rushes and a long bow.

One of the Indians stepped up to Leighton, bent, and sobbed for a moment like a very bad actor. Then he straightened and spoke in a nameless dialect. Leighton answered in the same tongue, and the Indians fell in behind them. Leighton said to Anna, "All right—let's go!"

He raised his left hand, and she saw with surprise that she had been grasping it. He smiled as he loosened the grip. "Don't be scared. They're friendly enough. They're the only men of the tribe left without the sickness. We'll be at the village in half an hour. And then you can get on with your job . . ."

The Kamayura village made Anna think of a painting of Hell. The eerily flickering light came from a big sullenly-burning pit in the centre of the clearing. "The local crematorium," Leighton explained. "It's their custom to cremate their dead. At a time like this, it's just as well." Smaller cooking fires were dotted about. By some of them figures were slumped.

"Are they all dead?" she asked.

"That's for me to find out," said Leighton. "Some of them will be. Others will just be ill and waiting to die. And they won't help each other. Look—"

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She saw the fit Indians, who had guided them in, settling down. They ignored the dead and the dying and talked among themselves.

"We haven't only got to kill the flu-bugs," said Leighton. "We've got to beat the Indians' death-wish, too. You'll find it's real enough."

He said she was to concentrate on the huts. She was to dose the living and Ramon would move out the dead.

A nightmare followed that was worse than any she could have imagined. In hut after darkened hut, she tried to force medicine on the blankly apathetic Indians—and they would not even swallow. The sky had lightened into dawn when in despair she found Leighton and gasped, "It's no use. There are children dying in there. I could save them, but they won't let me."

He sat her on a log and soothed her. He made her drink from his flask, and then he apologised. "I'm sorry. I shouldn't have left you on your own. But I had to make a start out here first."

She saw that the clearing had been transformed. No bodies were slumped by the fires. The fit Indians were pounding roots into flour, and some were cooking. "However did you get them to work?"

He smiled and pointed to the leader. The man's headdress was bedraggled, an eye was swollen, and at his feet his bow lay broken in two. "Sometimes a little rough medicine is necessary to give your brand of medicine a chance," said Leighton. "Now tell me what's happened. I suppose they've been refusing drugs?"

"That's just it."

"Well, it's no good giving them medicine. They'd sooner lie down and die. We must give them a little magic—something they've never seen before. Have you got any jabs? Something you can inject?"

"Of course."

He led her into the nearest hut and spoke intently to a somnolent Indian woman made hideous by the tribal lip-disc. Then he told Anna, "Go ahead. She's prepared to try your magic. You can inject now."

And Anna found that the woman, gazing fascinated at the syringe, offered no resistance. Nor did the other Indians. From hut to hut she went, injecting, feeding, cleaning, and the day had almost gone when at last she stumbled, blind with tiredness, across to the shelter that Leighton had put up on the far side of the clearing.

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She was almost too fatigued to speak, but he insisted that she should eat, and then he talked softly. But she did not hear his words because she slept as she sat there, her head on his shoulder.

She did not know what awakened her, but she blinked away the sleep, unable for an instant to remember where she was. Then she saw Leighton leaning back against a log, fast asleep, his face creased with lines of exhaustion. His arm was flung out across her, and she stirred to move it.

A shadow loomed on the other side of the dying fire. She looked up, and choked her cry in her throat. She recognised the bearded, heaving bulk of Krass.

He stood silent in the firelight, lowering his head like a bull, swaying slightly, but holding a rifle steady in his right hand. She felt Leighton stir beside her, and then he was instantly awake and on his feet between her and the gun.

"So you've saved me the trouble of coming after you," he said.

Krass snorted. "You're not taking me back to hang, Leighton. I've been holed up in the forest there, sick as a dog, for three days. Now I'm fit and I'm clearing off—and by God, I'm not going to swing for any stinking Indian!"

"You'll never make it, Krass. You might shake me off—but you can't escape the jungle *and* the sickness."

Krass grinned wickedly. "Well, that thought occurred to me, *Mister* Leighton. That's why I'm here. I want your rifle and I want your medical bag. I reckon with that extra gear to trade I can hocus-pocus the Indians and I might just make it. Anyway, I'm going to try—so hand over."

"You're a murdering swine and you get nothing from me!"

"Guts won't buy you a good grave—or your lady doctor. You can take your choice, Leighton. Either you hand over—or I put a bullet in your belly and take it."

Leighton did not answer, but Anna saw his body tense, and she could bear it no longer, and she found herself on her feet, saying, "There's no need to shoot. You can have the kit—here." And she tossed the bag of drugs towards Krass.

"You fool, Anna," Leighton said. "Don't you see he'll kill us anyway?"

Anna barely heard him. She was conscious only of the black O of the rifle muzzle pointing steadily at Tom Leighton; of the fact that at such a range a bullet could not miss; of an imperative sense that this man should not die as another had once died.

"The rifle," said Krass. She groped round for it.

"Hold it by the barrel," he said, "and bring it over to me so I can see your hand is nowhere near the trigger."

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" Anna! " shouted Leighton, but before he could move she had grabbed the gun and stumbled round the fire towards Krass.

" Drop it," he said. " Close to me." As he spoke his left arm came up with surprising speed, jack-knifing about her neck, the forearm tight against her throat, pinioning her against his side. Leighton moved and Krass barked, " Better stop, or she gets it first."

Leighton hesitated and Anna froze, terrified that her struggles might send a bullet crashing into his body. " Krass," she gasped, " hasn't there been enough killing? What more have you to gain? Take your drugs and your guns and go. I'll stop Leighton following. I promise."

" The only promise that's good enough for me," Krass grunted, " is the one I got from his Indian, Ramon, just now when I stuck a knife in him—a dead man's promise."

The blood was pounding in Anna's ears and she just managed to force out the words of the lie. " But Ramon isn't dead." She felt his body jerk as she went on, " Or if he is, I don't know who has his arrow trained on you."

Krass spun round, and as his grip loosed she tore her fingernails deep into the flesh of his arm. He let out a bellow and at that instant Anna was hurled to the ground as Leighton's body crashed into Krass. The rifle went flying into the air and then she rolled on to it as the two men, locked together, fought in the dust.

Animal noises came from them, and there was the crunch of bone on flesh and Leighton was catapulted back. Krass staggered to his feet. His hand went to his belt and she saw the glint of a knife. Leighton was rolling over, perilously near to one of the scattered cooking fires round which a group of Indians watched in silence. Leighton levered himself to his knees, shook his head dazedly, and then saw Krass waiting for him—legs apart, arms rigid, the blade of the knife pointing upward. " Come on," said Krass, " come and get it! "

Anna was conscious of the rifle beneath her, but she knew she could never fire it accurately in the flickering firelight. She sensed, too, that Leighton was not only fighting the knife; he was also fighting something inside himself, and he must fight alone.

She saw his hand groping, and then he jumped to his feet, clutching a brand from the fire. " All right, Krass," he yelled. " Burn, damn you, burn."

Slowly, half crouched, he advanced towards Krass, the flaming torch held before him like a sword. Step by step Krass edged back, his knife hand constantly moving and the steel catching the

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light like a snake's tongue. Krass lunged, and Leighton leapt aside. The torch arc-ed and Anna imagined she heard the hiss of burning as Krass shouted in pain and stumbled back, back. He glanced over his shoulder, and Anna gave a gasp of horror as she saw that he was only a few steps from the edge of the cremation pit. Already he must have felt the heat of the flames.

Still Leighton advanced, slowly. Suddenly Krass tossed the knife in his hand and caught it by the blade. There was a dull flash as he hurled it towards Leighton and then stumbled round the pit.

Leighton staggered as the knife embedded itself in the fleshy part of his left arm. He shook himself like a wounded animal, and the knife dropped, and still he went on. Krass was backing round the perimeter of the pit, his massive bulk distorted through the smoke.

Then Leighton leapt. He dived as if into water, but it was through the smoke, across the edge of the pit, that his body tore, his arms straight before him, the flames whipping back from his torch.

Anna covered her face with her hands. She could hear nothing but a muted scuffling. Then there came a sudden surge of smoke and flame from the pit, and silence but for the dragging of one man's footsteps across the clearing towards her.

She was afraid to look up. And then she heard his voice close by her, infinitely weary, infinitely sad. "I think I need a doctor, Anna."

As Anna bandaged his arm, Tom Leighton said softly, "He slipped. He fell into the pit."

"I know, I know."

"It doesn't matter to anybody but me—but if that hadn't happened I would have killed him with my hands."

"I know."

"But do you, Anna? Do you know? Do you know that fifteen years after the war I could kill again—in spite of swearing never to take a life, I could kill again . . . and want to."

"I know, Tom. And I know that when the evil is great, it is right that you should fight it to the death."

He did not answer. He mused on a cigarette, and suddenly asked, "Do you think you can keep the rest of this village alive?"

"I am sure of it, now the injections are taking."

"It's odd," he brooded. "Having to force these Indians to stay alive, when all they want is to lie down and die."

"Very odd. But worth doing, you think?"

"Do you?"

"Yes, I do."

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He grinned crookedly. "You could stick it out for six months, then?"

"For as long as necessary."

"That might be quite a time."

She smiled up at him. "Quite a time," she agreed.

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HEARTY

by

W. H. Boore

HEARTY, that was my Joe; too hearty; and more hearty than ever since falling in love with me at half past five on a Thursday afternoon in the High Street at the rush hour, with everybody looking on, and there's ashamed I felt. I mean to say, after all, one does not have a young man's arms round about one's waist and round about one's neck and round about half past five in a built-up area.

All the same, I saw Gladys Prouty looking on, and her young man so proper he wouldn't kiss her without presenting a petition; and I remember thinking, while Joe was still hot on my lips with all the traffic stopped and everything, I remember thinking, That will teach you, Gladys Prouty, that there's other things in the world besides please and thank you.

The worst of it was that Mam and Dad got to hearing about it, that Gladys Prouty having told her mam, knowing that her mam was like a party line only better amplified and more widely connected—the biggest gossip in the town and never short of items if they were sometimes only her own gossip come back suitably distorted and as good as new.

"What's this," said Dad, looking very stern over his glasses, "what's this about making a public exhibition of yourself?"

"Hearty," I said. "Joe's a bit hearty, that's all."

"Ought to be ashamed of yourselves," said my father. "That any girl of mine—" But Mam interrupted then.

"Oh, I don't know; after all, what's there to be ashamed of? It's goings-on in the dark that might be more wicked, after all."

And I thought Mam was looking at Dad as if she wouldn't have minded if he'd been a bit more dashing in his young days—and perhaps not too late now. But Dad was one of the quiet ones who economised on his movements but meant them when he made them. All the same, he didn't say much more, and there was a bit of a gleam in his eye as if he was giving Mam the once-over and finding something new. So I slipped out and left them to it. And when they ups and asks me to bring Joe along to tea

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the following Saturday, it did occur to me that perhaps Joe and I were a bit of an inspiration to the older ones, too.

But there's a limit to everything—and hearty, oh Joe! It started as soon as he got to the house. The door bell rang, and I went to answer it, all dolled up in my best, for a young man's first visit is an official occasion with all the trimmings and Mam and Dad standing behind me with welcoming smiles prefabricated for immediate use, while Alf my brother was peeping over the banisters to see if Joe looked the sort of sympathetic chap he might confide in, particularly about money.

Then I opened the door and Joe saw me—as I said, all dolled up.

"Gosh!" said Joe in a tone of such wonder and delight as might have thrilled me in circumstances less full of possibilities. "Gosh!" he said again, and then he went to work. By the time I touched down again, my hair was over my face and my frock all crumpled.

"Joe Rees," I said, "look at me."

"I am," said Joe, "that's what I want to do."

I stamped my foot. "Look at me," I said, "looking as if you'd tried to take advantage of me in broad daylight with the front door open."

There was such a silence that you could have heard a shadow gliding over the carpet. Then my father spoke, very stiff with the lips. "And what," he said, "and what effect may I ask, would the light of day and the open door have upon the outcome?"

My mother, I could see, was holding herself in a treat, and Father had his head a bit on one side. As for Joe, he was standing on one leg scratching it with the other, and looking as if he did not know whether to crow or peck or flap his wings.

So I started again from the beginning. "Mam and Dad," I said, "this is Joe."

"How are you, Joe?" said Mam, patting him on the shoulder, thereby encouraging the lad while avoiding the dangers of shaking hands. But Dad was not so wise.

Now my father's way of shaking hands was like laying a soused herring on your palm and then slipping it off again. But what Joe did was to seize the soused herring and toss it in the air several times, my father accompanying it as the only alternative to inadvertent amputation.

Well, we got over that visit. As my father said after Joe had gone, Time was a great healer, and no doubt the ringing in his—Father's—ears would pass away at the same time as he was recovering the use of his hands.

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But, of course, that was only the beginning—and I wasn't giving up Joe whatever they said. After all, a girl's got to make up her mind for herself; and she's got to choose the boy the family don't want; she's just got to, just so as not to be influenced. And anyway, Joe loved me dearly—dearly and loudly.

He took to calling at about seven in the evening—and there was no stopping him calling, even on the nights I wasn't going out with him. And every night, just before seven, you'd see the family tightening up for the knock on the door that would set the furniture dancing.

I used to try to get him to use the bell, like he had the first time on his best behaviour—his best, heaven help us all! But, as he explained, his enthusiasm did the knocking before he could say the word "bell."

Hearty, indeed, that was Joe. There was the day when he flung wide the backdoor to breathe deep the bright, fresh air. It happened to be locked at the time, and doorframes are so expensive with carpenters' wages what they are, and kitchens so draughty while waiting for repairs to be completed. But Dad and Mam—and Alf too—were very good. They put up with things; they even seemed to get used to Joe erupting over the place every day; though Dad said erupting was not strictly a good word for the phenomenon of Joe, because lava preserved what it covered, so he had been told.

Seven o'clock became our daily climax. As a rule Joe and I went out, after the affair with Alf. It happened one evening when Joe and I sat together in the parlour, all nice and private—at least, as private as anything can be with Joe on top of his form.

It was after Joe had gone that Alf came into supper with a grin all over his silly little, knowing little face; how horrible can a boy be?

"So," said Alf, "so, gosh! your hair is like beaten bronze, only it's so soft that it seems to breathe against a man's cheek; and your neck is smooth and white, except where it's been kissed for a minute or two; and gosh! your figure is so firm and curved; and gosh! you're lovely."

"You little rat," said I, "you've been listening at the keyhole."

"Not at the keyhole," said Alf, grinning more than ever, "not at the keyhole, but next-door-but-two in Mrs. Sim's—distance being the only sort of volume control applicable to Joe."

I was bristling with fury, but it was a funny thing that Mam and Dad were getting more easy about Joe.

"It's nice to have a bit of life about the place," said Mam.

"You know where you are with him," said Dad.

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" You know where she is—with him," said Alf with another of his silly grins.

Now we had always been a quiet household; well brought up, and possibly inhibited. But a daily dose of Joe was doing things to us. We were becoming door-slammers, and competitive in speaking, so that if a conversation was going on, we just talked it down when we had something else to say. And we were none the less happy for being a little less polite. There was a bit of " go " about us.

And Alf got himself a better job, which might or might not have come from speaking up a bit. Not that Joe was not courteous. He was so polite, he'd knock you over in making way for you. And that was the cause of the trouble. That—and the fact that old china is valuable.

As Joe explained to me afterwards, the tray was coming along at just about hip-level—which is just about hop-level when one is jumping to one side for one's future mother-in-law to pass. " Future mother-in-law," said Joe again, as if he wondered whether it meant anything any more. " And then," Joe went on, " the tray coming along like that, it sort of—well, you see—I mean—you can't have two things in the same place at the same time without one of them being somewhere else—which it was, on the floor, in pieces."

Joe spoke as if the tray was something like what the insurance companies call an act of God, but Mam and Dad seemed to hold ideas about Joe of a similar nature but theologically opposite. And when Dad wound up the longest speech he had ever made with the words, " You'd better go," I thought this was the end of the world. It wasn't as if I could meet Joe on the sly; because meeting Joe would be heard if not seen. All the same, I'd like to see anybody stop me.

For a week after that, our house was a quiet place, and growing quieter; for we were gradually relapsing into our old noiseless ways. Almost the old ways, but not quite; for at about seven o'clock every evening, Father would look up and rustle his newspaper, and then sink back into his chair with a sort of ruffled look. And Mam would walk over to the dresser and finger all that was left of Great-Grandma's precious china: one cup and a chipped saucer. She would finger them as if they were holy relics almost.

" I suppose," said Dad, about three days after the tragedy, " I suppose you are going out with that young man of yours tonight."

I nodded.

" It's a bit cold," said Mam.

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" A fire is wanted in that front room," said Father, who seemed to find some refuge in the passive mood—" a fire is wanted," but not by whom. And Alf was slouching about, dangling from the top of his spine.

For a moment I brightened up; but it was silly to do so, really, after what Dad had said to Joe. Things were very peculiar in our house for a day or two after that; we were acting as if there was something we'd forgotten. One night I had my coat on ready to go out to meet Joe, when Mam said, " You don't want to go just gallivanting every time," said Mam, and then she said nothing more, but turned away with a sigh.

" I might as well go to the pictures again," said Alf, looking round as if it was our fault.

But it was left to Dad to say the memorable phrase that broke the situation up into a grudging smile, and from a grudging smile into a cautious titter, and from a cautious titter into honest laughter.

It was just after seven o'clock. Alf was standing by the window, playing noughts and crosses with himself on a steamed-up pane, and cheating every time. Mam was by the table, sewing; and I was reading a book. Everything was quiet as the grave and nearly as deadly.

Suddenly Dad stirred; then he crumpled up his paper as if he hated it. " Where the devil is everybody? " said he.

Then he looked round; saw the three of us. For a moment he looked as sheepish as the day Mam caught him reading Alf's comic. Then he smiled and looked still more sheepish. Alf started to giggle, and Mam tittered; then Dad threw his head back and laughed. In the end, we were all laughing all over the place.

When we had pulled ourselves together somewhat, Dad got up, went to the dresser, and took down the cup and the chipped saucer. He held them out to me.

" Tell Joe," he said, " there's still something left in the china shop for him to have a go at! "

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FOR BUTTER, FOR WORSE

The difference between
Butter and margarine
Is the distant connection
Between love and affection.

If this be error and upon me proved
I cannot taste, nor no man ever loved.

ANON

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STRANGER IN THE NIGHT

"I'm afraid because I'm alone," she told herself

BY DAVID ALEXANDER

SHE WAS in the midst of the brightest and noisiest and largest city in the world, and suddenly she realised it was night, the deep of night, and it was very still, and she was unreasonably frightened.

It's just the reaction, she told herself as she began to tremble. So many terrible things have suddenly clamoured into my neat, safe, well-ordered little world in such a short space of time that I'm like someone who is coming out of shock.

She was standing on the platform of an old, old subway station in downtown Manhattan. Decades of city grime had obscured the lettering on the yellowed tiles of the walls. At four-thirty in the morning the place was like a subterranean cavern, stretching endlessly in both directions, and the soft, insistent, half-heard sounds were the sounds associated with the shadowy world beneath the earth.

Marcia Allen shivered and gathered her spring coat more tightly about her small, trim body. "I'm afraid because I'm alone," she told herself. "It's the first time in all my life I've been utterly alone."

The tiny sound of a token dropping into the coin box made her jump. It was followed by the click and whir of the turnstile. She was no longer alone on the platform. She looked up eagerly, hoping to draw warmth and comfort from another human being, even though he was a stranger.

Her breath caught in her throat, and for a tense moment she was frozen, incapable of movement. After the second of paralysed terror she moved hurriedly down the platform, away from the stranger, her high heels clattering a nervous drumbeat in the stillness. She could not explain why she instinctively feared the man who had come through the turnstile.

He was middle-aged, she judged, and stocky. It was not his physical appearance that frightened her. She feared him because

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he moved slowly towards her with a peculiar, deliberate gait, as if he was fogged by drink or drugs.

He continued to walk towards her, unhurriedly, haltingly, pausing when her clicking heels paused, stalking her again when her heels resumed the frantic tattoo of her retreat. She realised now that she was completely out of touch even with the old man in the change booth. She doubted that he would even hear her scream.

The stranger followed, moving slowly, with a kind of alert, animal caution. He seemed to be playing with her, in the sure knowledge that very soon now there would be no place to run. Fifteen or twenty feet away the subway station ended in a stone wall, terrifying in its implacable solidity.

Marcia stopped in her tracks, forcing herself to remain rigidly still even though her body was trembling violently. She was determined that she would flee no farther.

The stranger stopped too, but she knew that in a second he would begin to move towards her, slowly and warily. She tried to tear her eyes and her mind away from the hovering shadow down the platform . . .

It must have been about midnight that her Aunt Sarah had keeled over with the heart attack. They had come back from the theatre and made themselves comfortable in Aunt Sarah's apartment. And Marcia, for the hundredth time in the past three days, had been pouring out the story of her marriage and why she had decided after five years to leave Jim, whom all her friends considered a perfect husband. "It's the little things," she'd said, again for the hundredth time, not trying to explain it to Aunt Sarah, really, but trying to convince herself.

Aunt Sarah, for the hundredth time, had said, "I think you've made a great mistake . . ."

Then suddenly Aunt Sarah was pale and ill. Marcia had tried to call Dr. Hartley, Aunt Sarah's physician, but the answering service couldn't locate him. Finally, they had sent a brisk and competent young man, who at once diagonised a heart attack and called an ambulance from a down town hospital. In the confusion, Marcia had grabbed her alligator bag, the terribly expensive one that Jim had given her as a birthday present, forgetting completely that she had transferred her wallet and even her change purse to a beaded evening bag when she'd left for the theatre that evening. She had ridden down with Aunt Sarah in the ambulance, and it was after four o'clock in the morning, on the street outside the hospital where she was trying to find a cab, when she realised she had no money with her.

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Then she had found the subway token in her coat pocket.

She had not been afraid to take the subway at this hour. She had not thought of the subway station in terms of a long, deserted platform and a menacing stranger.

She glanced frantically up the tracks that faded off into dim infinity and saw no friendly winking light of an approaching train. She stood petrified, afraid to draw too close to the edge of the platform, hearing the hissing-serpent sound of the third rail. As she had expected, the stranger was shuffling towards her again, his head cocked at a queer, listening angle, his movements those of a stalking animal approaching its prey on padded feet.

The stranger was no more than ten feet from her now. He took another step, and another. I'm going to scream, she thought.

But it was only a whisper that came from her lips, so faint that only she could hear it. "Jim. Oh, please, Jim, please . . ."

Jim was more than fifty miles away in a stout, warm house of whitewashed brick on a tree-lined street in a suburban town. There was no one in the world now except Marcia Allen and the stranger.

Suddenly, a few feet, maybe inches, from her the stranger stopped stone-still, his head turned away from her, listening. He had heard the distant rumble of the subway train that was approaching the station at last.

The train stopped a long way from where Marcia was standing, and she was forced to run back towards it, back towards the waiting stranger, to board the first car. The man did not move until she went by him. Then she heard him, almost *felt* him, right behind her, running too. She turned abruptly when she reached the first open door, and the stranger almost lost his balance. As she boarded the train, he seemed to fall against her and he grabbed her arm as if he would pull her off the car, but she broke loose from his grasp.

And then sheer terror gripped her again. She and the stranger were the only occupants of the car.

Despite the swaying train, she ran back towards the next car, stumbled awkwardly in the doorway, and virtually fell into the arms of a trainman.

"What's the matter, lady?" he asked.

"That man!" she gasped. "That man tried to grab me!"

The trainman pushed her gently aside and leaned forward to look into the car. "No, lady," he said. "I know that man. He wouldn't hurt a fly."

"He *did*, I tell you! He kept moving closer and closer to me

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in the station, and when the train finally came he tried to keep me from getting on."

"No, lady. That's Tom. He nearly always gets this train. Owns the news-stand up on the street outside the station. Keeps it open late to catch the night owls from the gin mills. He's almost blind. Gets around fine, mostly, but it's hard for him to find the subway doors because he kind of sees with his ears, like an old dog does.

"When he can, he always gets close to somebody that's boarding the subway so he can hear them and follow them."

Marcia went back to the car where the stranger sat alone now, next to the door.

She thrust her hand into the pocket of her coat and her hand touched two things. Without looking at them she knew exactly what they were. One was a commutation ticket to her town in Connecticut, where her husband was waiting. The other was a timetable, and she knew there was a milk train from Grand Central around five. In an hour or so she could be home.

The subway train was making the long curve into Grand Central. Marcia rose and crossed unsteadily to the stranger, who sat calmly and quietly and seemingly at peace.

She put her hand softly on his shoulder. "Thank you," she said. "Oh, thank you so much."

The stranger looked up at her, a startled expression in the dim eyes that could barely see. "What, lady? Do I know you, lady? I don't see so well."

"You don't know me," she told him. "You wouldn't understand. But thank you, anyway."

"What? What did I do, lady?"

The doors were opening.

Marcia aswered, but she spoke so softly he could not hear her words. "Thank you for teaching me what it means to be alone," she said.

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★ ★ ★

A LACK OF PRINCIPAL

According to a former pupil, it was to an earlier Principal of the College, Dr. Herbert Kynaston, that Miss Beale once wrote a letter of complaint. One of his horrid boys, she declared, had kissed one of her girls. To this Dr. Kynaston replied briefly: "Dear Miss Beale, It takes two to kiss."

JOSEPHINE KAMM,
How Different From Us

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DIGGERS' DELIGHT

Snowey sipped, stopped, and raised his eyebrows

BY NOEL CARRICK

KOREAN BEER had been described as sour water on more than one occasion and by no less an authority than company cook, Soupspoon Walsh. But even Soupspoon agreed that the product of the Sogu-ri Brewery was, to drop into cookhouse vernacular, a lush drop. I even liked it myself and I'm a pretty hard bloke to please. In truth, the whole company agreed that it was a beautiful brew, thick and black like stout and carrying a fair kick. And to add to its desirability, it was accessible—more or less.

It was a mere twenty-four hours since a spick-and-span Yankee regiment had relieved our battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment in the line at Chipyong-ni and an eight-hour march had brought us to our rest camp in the village of Sogu-ri. During the march from the line the weary Diggers displayed scant interest when the news spread through the ranks that the industry of our rest-up town was brewing. It was not until Charlie platoon found itself billeted in the bamboo storage sheds outside the main brewery walls that the inventive faculties of certain individuals were set to work. If I may say so, the two individuals whose inventive faculties were the sharpest when it came to getting hold of alcohol—or dodging the odd job, for that matter—were me and me mate, Snowey Pattern.

After we had spinebashed the march out of our systems and the rest of the boys had wandered out of the shed to explore the village, Snowey and me held a meeting of the platoon's two-man committee of inquiry. As the regiment's supply of Aussie beer was performing its usual little trick of being late in arriving, the question before the chair was really quite simple: how to remove an adequate supply of beer from one of the five brewing vats and not get caught?

So it came to pass that in the dead of night, when all good Diggers should have been getting their eight hours' solid, Snowey and me took a stroll in the fresh air down to the brewery.

Snowey is a small wiry little cove, just like the greyhounds he

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trained at White City before joining up, and it did not take long to shove him over the brewery wall. Me and a third accomplice, Soupspoon, recruited because he alone could furnish the necessary equipment, kept cave below the sun-dried brick walls.

Snowey's expedition into the gloomy brewing-room was a complete success. Tying a twelve-foot length of fourbetwo to the handle of the necessary equipment, one of Soupspoon's largest dixies, he lowered it into one of the vats and drew it up brimful of the brewery's finest product. He then lugged it back to the wall, clambered up without spilling too much, and lowered it down to Soupspoon and me. We crept down past the guardhouse to the kitchen truck to sample our prize. With a tin mug of the captured brew in our hands, a toast to ingenuity was announced and the grog sampled—and pronounced one of the finest products of the brewers' ancient art.

After the initial success of the forage party into the brewery, nightly expeditions were made. A whole dixieful proved just a bit much even for three such experienced drinkers, so we let a few of the other blokes in on the secret. With the brewery owner tucked away in some camp down South with countless other refugees, and the C.O. not very concerned, it was a cinch. The officers let us have our heads after the tough spell in the line and nightly revelry took place in the food storage tent behind the mobile kitchen truck.

On one such night when Snowey was holding the floor on "the bloody hide of the Libs passing a bill to control urgers at dog meetings," Blowflies Carson, the platoon's hygiene corporal, immortalised himself by inadvertently inventing the Sogu-ri Shandy. A bit unsteady on his pins—because of a hard day removing the company's garbage, of course, not the effects of the beer—he crossed the tent to point out a flaw in Snowey's argument. Halfway across, he tripped over a case full of onions on which Snowey had been sitting before he rose to address the house.

It is said that many great inventions are the result of luck, and such was the case of the Sogu-ri Shandy. By some handsome gesture from Lady Luck, Blowflies had a bottle of sake, liberated from a North Korean prisoner, tucked in the top pocket of his giggle suit. When he tripped, the bottle of sake shot out of his pocket, sailed through the air, and landed plunk into the dixie of grog. With a splosh the bottle broke on the shallow metal bottom and sake clouded up through the beer like antiseptic poured into a dish of water.

Consternation reigned. A ring of incredulous moody faces peered into the misbegotten cocktail. Blowflies was cursed as a

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" bloody fool," " clumsy oaf," and " tanglefooted bastard," but no term of abuse could relieve our feelings. When tongues were finally lubricated by the grog that remained in our mugs, Snowey, most vehement in his abuse of Blowflies, idly stirred the resultant mixture with his mug, scooping it up and pouring it back into the dixie until the concoction finally evolved as a thick soupy mess, like used sump-oil only with a purplish hue.

Taking care to avoid the broken glass at the bottom of the dixie, Snowey raised a mug of the mixture, smelt, raised his eyebrows, sipped, stopped, sipped again, and then drained his mug in one fell swoop. His ejaculation, "Struth!" prompted the rest of us to taste; and thus for the first time in history the delights of the Sogu-ri Shandy were enjoyed in company.

From such an innocuous conception, the fame of the shandy spread through the camp.

Sergeant-Major Hollings, training the tug-of-war team for the company sports, frequently had his men rubbed down with it, declaring it highly beneficial both externally and internally. In the Officers' Mess, the Royal Toast was drunk in the new shandy, and a bottle, appropriately wrapped and labelled, was sent by the C.O. to the colonel of a Yankee cavalry regiment camped a couple of miles down the valley. Sake became well nigh unprocurable and its price rose accordingly, but by swopping the late-arriving Australian beer, enough was smuggled into the camp to keep the supply of shandy up to the demand.

For the first time in the history of the Australian Army, the ration of Aussie beer went undrunk.

But all good things must come to an end and the Sogu-ri Shandy industry ceased business abruptly one afternoon when the bearded owner of the brewery turned up. Believing that the Red advance had been finally checked and deeming it safe to return and claim his rightful property, he swaggered into the camp and demanded an explanation for the unauthorised removal of his product. Then followed a hurried conference with the C.O., which resulted in the brewer being adequately compensated from company funds, and we were all touched for a quid to make up the difference.

And so the shandy boom burst, for the removal of beer was expressly forbidden in Routine Orders pinned up in the Orderly Room tent. The trading value of the official ration of Diggers' Delight again reached a premium and, in the absence of the local product, was again consumed by the thirsty Diggers. But the memory of the Sogu-ri Shandy lingered on.

Faced with a catastrophe never before experienced, the committee of inquiry met again, with Soupspoon—long ago promoted

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a director of Sogu-ri Enterprises Ltd.—attending in an advisory capacity. After thrashing out the pros and cons of the situation, Plan Two was decided upon. Snowey, who as you can see by now was the brains of the outfit, was elected to play the starring role.

After spending several days fossicking around the camp for the necessary utensils, a hammer, gimlet, and chisel from the R.A.E.M.E. depot, a couple of rolls of sticky plaster from the First Aid Post, and a score of lengths of rubber tubing used to bring water from cans to cool the barrels of the Vickers machine-guns, Plan Two was put into operation. Having had some experience in Pentridge before the war, I chipped a small neat hole in the brewery wall right at ground level where it would not be noticed. The joined-up lengths of rubber tubing were pushed through, and Snowey was again hoisted over the wall, charged with the responsibility of running the hose to the base of one of the two remaining full vats of beer.

After half an hour Snowey was back. "It was a bloody horrible job," he explained. When he bored the hole in the base of the vat he had to keep his little finger in it to stop the beer running out while he arranged the tubing. Finally he managed to get the tubing in the hole and sealed it in with some well-masticated chewing-gum. Covering the tubing with the bamboo matting which littered the brewing-room floor, he returned, and signalled me and Soupspoon to start siphoning.

We sucked at the end of the tube for a while, then out ran the beer. It was Soupspoon's turn to suck when the beer started to run and it took me ten seconds pulling his hair to get him away from it. The beer flowed perfectly and we collected a sample dixieful before plugging up the tube with a cork and throwing an old gunny sack against the wall so it would not be noticed.

Furtive now were the parties behind the mobile kitchen truck. We allowed only a very small group to join in the victory celebration as the supply of the shandy's main ingredient was strictly limited.

"More than a dixieful each night and the brewer will notice his grog's going off and be right on to us like a bloody shot," asserted Snowey. We all agreed with such wisdom.

About this time, the provision of the Sogu-ri Shandy was replaced in the minds of the Diggers by a coming event of great importance. This was the period of the war immediately after the United Nations forces were chased up and down the peninsula. The North Koreans had been pushed back nearly to the thirty-eighth parallel, the Chows had swarmed into North Korea to their assistance, and the line had solidified for a time while

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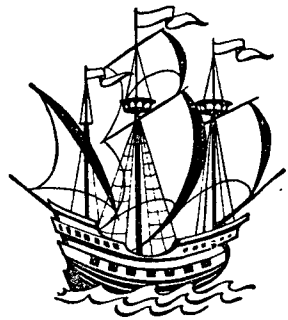

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both sides put their houses in order for the next move. The General himself, anxious to consolidate the advance and end the war before Christmas, decided to call a meeting of all front-line commanders to outline his plans.

The Australian camp, being deepest in the valley and safe from the strafing raids of the M.I.G.s, was chosen as the venue of the big event.

All this was very good for the honour and glory of the regiment and all that, but it meant a hell of a lot of work for us. For days before, the sergeant kept us busy tidying up the camp, carrying chairs and stools from one place to another, and generally getting the joint into shipshape order. To add to the indignity of it all, Charlie platoon was chosen as guard platoon on the day of the meeting. So on top of all the work fixing up the camp, we then had to blanco our webbing and get spruced up.

Late in the afternoon, we lined up at the main gates to await the arrival of the brass. At dusk jeeps started to come up the narrow rutted track and we saluted and presented arms until I thought my hands would fall off. After coming through the gates, the brass were driven up to a big marquee where the meeting was to be held. Having had their hands shaken by the C.O., the adjutant showed them to their places in the big tent.

When the General himself arrived, he inspected us, and then strolled up to the marquee. At last the platoon commander dismissed us and we retired to our tents—some of us, that is. Still in well-pressed battledress, the select group met as usual in the ration tent. Unfortunately, Soupspoon, who had copped the job of providing light refreshments for the big meeting, was only able to make quick visits from the cookhouse.

A hard day's work seems to give a man a terrible thirst. Alas, all too soon the shiny metal bottom of the dixie emerged through the cloudy liquor without our palates being anywhere near satisfied. Being a very special occasion and realising the necessity of toasting the brass-hat meeting in a fitting manner, we voted to break precedent and replenish the supply. Snowey and Blowflies were detailed to take the empty dixie and fill it from the hose at the base of the brewery wall.

Five minutes later they were back with disastrous news. After a mere pint or two had flowed into the dixie, the stream had suddenly stopped.

Knowing that the duty officer and the guard sergeant were busy with other matters, the meeting decided that immediate repairs were necessary while the opportunity lasted. Me and Snowey changed into our gymnasium sneakers and we all crept

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down to the wall. Blowflies bunked us over and we crept through the gloom of the brewery yard like a couple of coppers conning a swy game.

It was a difficult job. Snowey's ingenuity in running the hose beneath mats, along the top of a wooden fence, and through hollow bamboo sticks, came in for some pretty sound abuse, even from Snowey himself, as we traced the hose in the pitch blackness. We stumbled and swore over old cases lying on the floor and fumbled with doorknobs which refused to turn. Finally we emerged, through a door that opened without trouble, into the brewing-room—without finding the break.

Here extra caution was needed as we reckoned the vats might be guarded. The brewing-room was on the top floor and on one side of it was a large doorless opening with a sheer drop beneath it, where the barrels of beer were lowered on ropes to the court-yard below. Halfway from the door to the first vat, we found the break. A heavy object dragged across the floor had torn up the matting and broken the hose underneath. Beer gurgled softly from the end coming from the vat and the precious fluid trickled to oblivion into the dirty matting floor. We taped up the hose and were licking our fingers when we suddenly realised what the heavy object was that had broken our pipe.

We were about to turn and leave the room when a loud click, like a .303 rifle bolt sliding into place, came through the darkness.

Snowey, who was in front, grabbed me by the wrist, and we edged our way soundlessly round the vat. Peering through the darkness to the opening in the wall, we were greeted with a panoramic view of the Aussie camp with the big marquee nestling a hundred yards away in the foreground. That was not the only view. Crouched at the opening were four figures, two behind a snout-nosed medium machine-gun and two behind a two-inch mortar.

The barrel of the machine-gun was pointed directly at the centre of the marquee and the mortar elevated to lob its nasty missile right on top of the gathered brass-hats.

Snowey and me sobered up in a flash. I'm not much good when it comes to thinking with any degree of speed and I just stood there, trembling like hell, waiting for Snowey to do something. Snowey let go of my wrist and started to feel around the gloom, looking for a weapon of some sort. He picked up a length of heavy Korean pine, about five feet long, which was leaning against the vat. Levering it down inch by inch, and keeping his eyes glued on the four figures at the opening, he passed one end to me.

The moment my hands took a grip on the plank, one of the

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figures moved. There was a metallic clunk as the mortar shell hit the bottom of the barrel.

We lunged forward the instant the second figure behind the mortar pulled the catch at the base of the barrel. Snowey's end of the plank caught the mortarman in the small of the back. He stumbled and fell forward on his weapon. The bomb emerged from the barrel as the gun toppled sideways and whistled over the camp, landing with a horrible bang in the truck lines.

During our lunge forward with the plank before us, the machine-gun started to clatter, but the gunner twitched involuntarily at the sound behind him and the bullets thudded through the top of the marquee.

The full force of our charge sent the four Chows headlong through the opening with their weapons. Screaming as they fell, they landed in a mangled heap of flesh and metal in the brewery courtyard. Bedlam reigned in the camp but the battle was over before it really started. Brass-hats tumbled out of the marquee and flung themselves in most unofficerlike manner into the drainage ditch along its flank.

It was a couple of minutes before me and Snowey clarified the situation with the duty officer who was running wildly around wondering what was going on. With the C.O. and the duty officer, we examined the Red posse in the courtyard and found them all very dead.

Seven generals, eighteen colonels, and five majors emerged muddy and smelly from their short sojourn in the ditch—where Blowflies had been throwing the kitchen refuse instead of taking it to the dump.

The C.O. took us down to the marquee and introduced us to the General himself. He shook my hand with a paw that smelt suspiciously like one of Soupspoon's thrown-out curries. Our bravery and initiative were commended, and after the brass-hats had cleaned themselves up a bit we dined on Soupspoon's light refreshments with them. In the end we had to shake hands with the bloomin' lot before they departed to their various units.

Next morning the Australian regiment was paraded. The parade was handed over to the General, and all this led up to our names being called. The R.S.M. marched us out and stood us to attention in front of the regiment. The General then pinned a gleaming medal on our tunics. The citation described us as two brave men whose courage and devotion to duty had saved the whole hierarchy of the U.N. forces and then related what had happened—our version, that is.

"Their initiative in secretly entering the brewery after seeing

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the Red patrol, and not raising the camp, was an example of clear thinking. Had they notified the guards and not followed the patrol themselves, the General Officer Commanding the United Nations Forces and the whole of his staff and Corps Commanders would not be here to continue the struggle against aggression."

The General dismissed the parade, and again shook our hands before getting into his jeep and driving out of the camp.

Then came the cruellest blow of all. Our C.O., seeing the ever-present danger of the brewery, had the mortar platoon lob a couple of shells on it, despite the protests of the long-suffering brewer.

And so ended the era of the Sogu-ri Shandy. As a reward, our C.O. ordered the canteen to issue Snowey and me two bottles of Melbourne beer a day for the next three months.

It took us weeks to get back our taste for the stuff.

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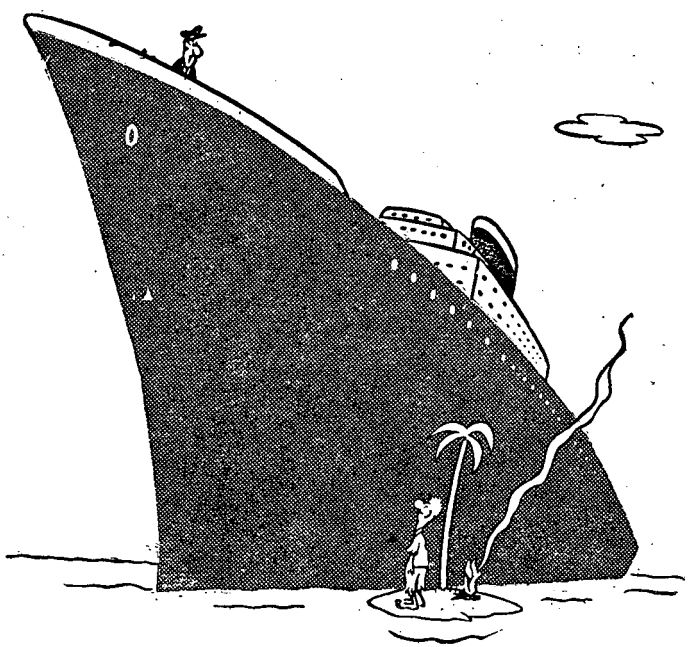

"Yes?"

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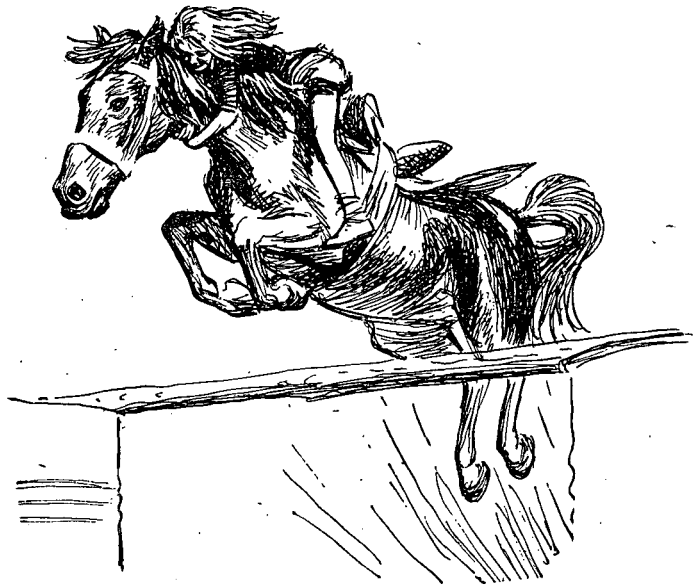

THROW YOUR HEART OVER

BY STUART CLOETE

HELEN heard her father say, " She's—she's not going to die, is she? "

She was the she, her. It's me they're talking about, she thought.

" No, John," Smitty said. Dr. Smith was his real name, but nobody called him that. " There's even a bit of improvement."

" How long will it take her? " her father said.

" I don't know, Johnnie. You see, we don't even know just what

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she's got. It's not polio—at least not an ordinary polio. It's something different—something new. If only this were America. They know more there. In ten years—"

"Ten years," her dad said. "In ten years she'll be twenty-one and I'll be forty-two. Marriage, children. What's there for her? What'll her life be?"

"She's not going to die, Johnnie. There's some improvement. Let's leave the rest to God. There is a God, you know—that's something we doctors find out."

"Expecting a miracle, Smitty?" her dad said.

"There are miracles, too. Wonderful things still happen. Things that cannot be explained."

"Like her being struck down with this thing—an innocent child."

That's me, Helen thought. I'm an innocent child. The idea pleased her. Then she thought about God. She thought He must be something like her grandfather. Bigger, of course, with a bigger white beard, but resembling him in many ways. It was interesting to lie here and hear every word they said in the adjoining bedroom. Of course they didn't know about it. How could they, since she didn't talk to herself?

Then Smitty said, "The kid's bored. She's an outdoor girl. What about a pony? Ever think of a pony, Johnnie?"

Helen pulled herself up in bed and clasped her hands together.

"A pony?" her father said. "You think she could ride?"

"One of the boys could hold her on. Old Herman, for instance. She could get around and see the veld again. The thorns are in bloom now. Yellow," the doctor said. "Yellow and perfumed." In her mind Helen saw the little fluffy yellow balls of the thorn flowers and smelt them. "I'm going to ask her," Smitty said.

"I can't buy a pony," her father said. "I can't even pay you."

The door banged and Smitty was in the room. "Do you want a pony, Helen?" he said.

"No, I don't want a pony, Doc."

"It would do you good. You could get out. Get around again. Old Herman could hold you on."

Helen gripped the sides of her bed again and leaned forward. The round white enamelled bars were hard and cold in her hand. Something big was happening. She was on the edge of an event. This was her opportunity. She had always wanted a pony. But not now.

"Ponies are for kids, Doc," she said. "I want a horse—a real horse. I'm a girl now. I'm not a kid any more."

In her mind she saw the horse—a milk-white Arab with a flowing mane and tail. She stared into his liquid eyes. She felt his hot breath in her face. Tears came into her eyes. She brushed her hair back from her face and stared at Smitty and her dad. They looked very big standing there looking down at her in her bed.

"All right, a horse. Do you want one? Do you want to get out?"

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Smitty was close to her now. She could smell him. She smelt tobacco, whisky, tweed, dog, and the hair stuff he used. His eyes, behind the thick lenses of his glasses, were enormous. She stared into them. She drowned herself in them.

I'll marry him, she thought. If he'll wait till I'm grown up and well, I'll marry him. The tears ran down her cheeks. They were salt in her mouth. She could not speak. There was so much she wanted to say, and all she could do was to cry like a baby, like a kid.

Smitty had her wrist in his hand. She could feel his strength pouring into her. She pulled herself together.

"Yes," she said, "oh yes. A horse. I want to get out." In her mind she saw it all again: the veld, the thorns, the rocks, the cattle, the tall golden grass bent before the wind; the nests hanging like grass balls from the swaying branches of the willows by the spring. She was sobbing now and he held her. Smitty was holding her. Everything was going to come right.

Then her mother came in. She held her, too, and her father patted her hand. She knew why her mother hadn't been with them. Helen knew she had been afraid of what Smitty might say after he had examined her.

Her mother was beautiful. Fair skin with big blue-grey eyes. She smelt of lavender.

Dad smelt of petrol and grease and oil. Once he had smelt of the farm—of cows and milk and manure and hay all mixed up with tobacco and sweat.

He worked for Mr. de Wet of the Central Garage now, and Mother ran the farm. It was the only way they could make ends meet, they said, since the drought had hit them—three years of drought. Helen often wondered what meeting ends were. What happened when ends did meet? When they didn't the cattle died and Dad went to work for Mr. de Wet. Before that he'd been on the farm. But she had been too small really to notice what went on. I was just small and happy then, she thought.

Vaguely, half asleep, she saw Smitty open the door for her Mother and pat her shoulder. "You're a good girl, Clare," he said.

It was funny to hear him calling Mother a girl. But Daddy did too, sometimes. Grownups were really very funny. There was no way of understanding them—except Smitty. There was something about him with his big owl's eyes. Of course it was the glasses that made them look so big. But I'd like to marry him, she thought. The horse, the milk-white horse, was all due to him. The dream that was going to come true.

When she'd been well she hadn't wanted a horse or pony. Why should she have, when she could run about so fast on her own two legs? But since she had been ill she'd thought about horses so much. Looked at pictures of horses galloping. How wonderful that must be, to be on the back of a galloping horse.

The last things she remembered were her dad standing at the

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door looking back at her and the click of her mother's heels on the staircase. Smitty must be waiting for Dad.

In the old car on his way back to the garage Johnnie Blackett went over what Smitty had said. No worse . . . getting better . . . trust in God . . . a horse . . . A horse. What was the old story? For want of a nail the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; and for want of a horse the rider was lost . . . "A horse! a horse! my kingdom for a horse!" That was Shakespeare—or at least he thought it was. *For want of a horse my daughter may be lost.*

He'd never forget the look in her eyes, big as saucers—she had Clare's eyes—and her remark, "Ponies are for kids. I'm a girl now." A girl, and in just a few years she'd be ripe for life, for love.

Horses seemed to mean a lot to her. She had never mentioned it before. Perhaps because she was ill. Perhaps because as long as it wasn't mentioned it could not be refused.

She was an old-fashioned kid with plenty of courage and a mind and will of her own. That frail little fairylike creature made of ivory and gold had a will of steel. And Smitty had seen it and thought of an answer. If she set her mind on anything, she'd do it or die in the attempt.

He remembered what his own father had told him when he began to jump his first pony. "Throw your heart over first, Johnnie, and you'll follow it, Johnnie boy." After that he'd never been afraid.

She was like that. But a horse . . . Horses cost money. There weren't even any horses around to look at and maybe borrow any more. Ten years ago a dozen men would have lent him a horse. Ten years ago he could have bought a dozen horses.

He looked out at the veld as he drove along the red dirt road. How beautiful it was! Rolling country dotted with clumps of bush and isolated thorns all splashed with the gold of spring. Soon it would be summer, and they might get good rains this year.

When Johnnie got to the garage he was surprised to find it unchanged. It looked exactly as it had looked yesterday. But yesterday was so long ago. So much had happened since then. How afraid he had been when he drove home to talk to Smitty. Helen was going to live. She was better. She might get well.

If only I could get her a horse, he thought. Such a simple thing, really—or it used to be. But now even in Africa a horse was a rare animal, apart from valuable show horses and so on. The ordinary farm riding horses had all disappeared.

Hendrik de Wet came out of the front office to greet him. "Everything O.K., Johnnie?" he said. He meant about Helen, of course. By this time everyone in Boomspruit would know that Smitty had made a new and detailed examination after the specimens came back from the laboratory in Johannesburg.

"O.K. At least she's no worse, and he holds out hope. Slow, of course. But hope."

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"Slow but sure," de Wet said. "That's the ticket." He was an Afrikaner and given to such phrases. He became businesslike. "The tractors have come, Johnnie. They're on the siding. Get them down and line 'em up—like soldiers," he said. "Like a lot of bloody Rooisbadgies—redcoats."

He laughed, a big booming laugh that shook the belly that hung out in a great shaking ellipse below his belt. "Nice and straight," he said. "All six of them, so that the farmers can't miss them. Spring," he said. "The ploughing season. We'll borrow some ploughs from the store—three-furrow ploughs and discs—and hook them up. Give 'em the idea."

He became confidential and took Johnnie's arm. "Farmers," he said. "Got to show 'em. You've got to put two and two together for 'em. See the tractors and they'll never think of ploughs. See the ploughs and they'll never think of tractors." He seemed to have forgotten that Johnnie was a farmer.

Two hours later the bright red tractors were aligned with not a six-inch difference between them and each had a plough or a disc hooked on behind it. "All done," he said to de Wet. "Come, Kyk—look at 'em. Pretty as a picture."

They stood together in the sunlight looking at the scarlet tractors glistening in their clean uniforms of paint.

"Pretty," de Wet said. "Beautiful!" He stroked the bonnet of the one nearest to him.

"Seen the horses, Johnnie?" he said.

"What horses?"

"In the sale yard. Stock sale tomorrow, you know. Wednesday. The old and the new," de Wet said. "Tractors coming in and the farm horses going out. This lot must be about the last around here. That's why I got the tractors down. I heard a lot of farmers were selling horses to a dealer and jumped in. Took a risk, of course. But a calculated risk. That's business, Johnnie boy. That's what I like."

"Mind if I go up and look at them?" Johnnie said.

"Look at what?"

"The horses."

"No. Sure, go ahead. If you see any of the sellers, bring 'em back to see these beauties." He spoke as if the tractors were chorus girls. "No deposit. Easy terms. Go ahead, my boy." He patted him on the back. Hendrik de Wet was a great patter. Men on the shoulder; children on the head; and women—well, he patted them, too, wherever he could.

The horses, all oldish farm animals, most of them much the worse for wear, work, and a long truck ride, stood with lowered heads in the stock kraal. Greys, blacks, bays—there wasn't much to choose between them.

As Johnnie went up and leaned his arms on the rails, one horse, a roan mare that he had not seen before, looked up and came towards him. When she was about a yard away she stopped and extended her nose towards his hands. Her nostrils were wide

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open. She blew through them softly. Her eyes, one of them a wall-eye, looked into his.

A horse, my kingdom for a horse . . . For want of a horse my daughter was lost. " Remember there's still a God," Smitty had said.

While he and the roan were looking at each other a tall thin sunburnt man came up to him. " Dog meat," he said. " That's what they are. More's the pity. And to think I've come down to this. There's no good or bad horses no more. Just fat and thin. That's all, mister. Imagine judging men that way, for their worth —fat or thin."

" Yours? " Johnnie said.

" Mine. I was a horsedealer once—real horses, I mean. Saddle horses, cart horses, mares for breeding, studs, even a blood horse now and again. Do you think I like it? " He turned on Johnnie savagely.

" Man," he said, " I love horses. Take her, for instance—" he jerked his head at the mare—" that's a good un. A good mare. I've never seen a bad roan yet. And I like a wall-eye. No, she's not blind in it." He caught her head collar—she was close to them now—and flashed his hand over her blue eye. " See her wink," he said.

God, Johnnie thought, God sent Smitty. God sent the roan. God sent the dealer. God told Hendrik to tell me. " Will you sell her? "

" Sell? Of course I'll sell her, and much sooner to you than to the knacker."

" How much? "

" Do you know how they sell horses today, mister? "

" How do they? "

" By the pound. Like butter or cheese or old iron. A lame horse is worth as much as a sound one. Meat, that's what they are. Not horses any more. Just dog meat. Meat for pets." He spat in the dust with disgust.

" Old horses, yes, old wornout horses. That's one thing. But her—she's not really old. Nine years, she is. With nine years of work left in her and nine good foals if you want to breed from her. She's bred before. Roomy," he said. " If you put her to a blood horse you'd get something. But nobody'll wait no more. Nearly a year's gestation. Three more years for the foal to come to hand. But what's four years when you think of the pleasure of it? "

" How much? " Johnnie asked again.

" Thirty pounds, mister, and that's what she cost me, more or less, but I'll make enough on the others."

" Will you hold her for me while I get the money? " Hendrik would advance it to him. " Will you wait? "

" I'll wait. I got to hang around anyway till the sale tomorrow. You'll find me at the hotel. Ask for Fred Sparrow. Sparrow, the horsedealer."

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As Johnnie turned to go Sparrow said, " Listen, mister, this is a deal you can't lose on. You take her. You'll feed her up a bit, naturally, and if you don't like her I'll buy her back any day and give you a profit. Can't lose, man," he said to Johnnie's back, " and there's not many deals like that in the world today."

Hendrik de Wet began to laugh when Johnnie told him what he wanted the thirty pounds for.

" Man," he said, " this is 1960. What do you want a horse for? "

" She's a good mare," Johnnie said, " a roan with a wall-eye on the near side, and only nine years old—too good for dog meat."

" Man, you're so bust you've got to borrow to buy her. What is it? You going soft or something? "

" I'm not soft, de Wet," Johnnie said. " No, I'm as hard as hell. So hard that I'll chance everything on this gamble."

" You're not going to race her? "

" I am, Hendrik."

" When? How? "

" I'm going to race her with Death and the stakes are high."

" You're mad, Johnnie."

" I'm not. It's Smitty."

" The doctor? "

" Yes. He thinks if I can get Helen on a horse she has a chance."

De Wet pulled out his pocketbook and counted out six fivers. " Here you are, Johnnie, and it's not a loan. You've done more than your job here."

" I'll pay you back, Hendrik."

" In your own time when you are on your feet again."

Johnnie took his hand. They turned away from each other, embarrassed by their unaccustomed emotion. Each had seen something in the other that he had not known existed, for neither had thought the other had a heart.

Mr. Sparrow was in the bar of the Jacaranda Hotel fondling the ears of a crossbred ridgeback with one hand and holding a glass of beer in the other.

Johnnie sat down beside him and put the money on the table. " Here's the thirty quid."

Sparrow put down the glass and stuffed the money into the breastpocket of his coat. " I'm glad," he said. " She was too good for it. It's not her time yet. You know, Mr. —"

" John Blackett," Johnnie said.

" Mr. Blackett," Sparrow went on, " we all come to it—man and horse and dog. One day we'll all come to the end of our tether. But it should be the end, not in the middle, like—" he paused—" nor the beginning."

" Beginning? "

" I lost a boy in the war," he said. " Nineteen he was. And he had the making of a good un, though I say it myself."

" That's why," Johnnie said.

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" Why what, Mr. Blackett? "

" I want her."

" Go on, tell me."

" It's for my girl. She's paralysed and the doctor thinks riding might help her. I only wonder if she can hang on. It's her legs, you know."

Mr. Sparrow put a brown veiny hand on his knee. " She's alive, Mr. Blackett. That's something. That's a lot."

Johnnie got up. They shook hands. He seemed to be shaking hands with everybody today. " I'm going to say something funny," Johnnie said, " and if you laugh I'll knock you down." His eyes blazed. " I think God sent you and I don't believe in God. At least I didn't." Then he turned and went out of the bar. The big ridgeback wagged its tail slowly from side to side and looked up at Mr. Sparrow.

Now it was a matter of getting the mare home. It was only five miles and Johnnie arranged with Franz, the boy who did odd jobs around the garage, to take her.

" I'll tell you when," he said, " and take you up to get her."

"Ja, baas." Five bob he was getting. That was a whole day's wage and the baas was driving him back in his car. It was like Christmas. Man, if this happened every day, what a life he would lead!

At five o'clock Johnnie took Franz up to the kraal and they caught the mare. It was not difficult. She seemed to recognise him when he called her, and came up to him on her own.

She led easily. It would take Franz only an hour or so to get her back to the farm. Johnnie drove fast and went straight to Helen's room, and with her wrapped in a blanket on his knees waited on the stoep with his eyes fixed on the farm road till he saw them coming. The black man walked easily; tirelessly. Five miles was nothing to him. The mare followed like a dog, the riem he was holding hanging slack in a loop.

Helen saw them almost as soon as he did. " There's a boy coming, with a horse, Daddy," she cried, " a boy with a horse, and they're coming this way. We'll see them. Oh, Daddy, we'll see them." To see anything had become an event for Helen.

The man and the horse got bigger.

" It's Franz," Helen said, " with a roan."

" Certainly looks like it," Johnnie said. " I wonder what he wants."

" It's late," Helen said. " Perhaps they could stay the night. Perhaps you could put me up on the horse for a minute, Daddy, and we could play pretend."

" Pretend what, darling? "

How stupid could grownups be? " That he's ours," she said, " our very own horse."

" We'll see, darling."

Franz pulled up at the stoep. He tied the riem to the rails. " Here you are, baas."

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"What's he mean, Daddy?"

"What he says."

"He said, 'Here you are.'" Helen was wriggling like an eel in her father's arms.

"Well, here she is, Helen," Johnnie said. "Your horse."

"Oh . . . oh, she's really ours!"

"She's yours, darling. With the compliments of Dr. Smith and Mr. Hendrik de Wet."

"Put me up, Daddy. Put me up."

"She's filthy."

"Never mind. Mother can wash me again. Oh, please, please." She clasped her hands together as if she was praying.

Her mother came on to the stoep. "What is it, Johnnie?"

"I bought a mare, Clare, and Helen wants me to put her on her back, but she's too dirty."

"Put her up, Johnnie. The child will wash and so will her pyjamas."

"Put me up, Daddy. Mother says I can. Mother says—"

Johnnie lifted her on to the mare's back and held her there.

The horse turned her head and nuzzled the child's knee. "Oh," Helen said, "she's got blue eyes. Just like Mother."

"Only one blue eye," Johnnie said.

"One of each," Helen said. "One like Mother's and one like yours. How wonderful!"

Johnnie laughed. It was wonderful to see her so happy. Then he took her down. "Bed now," he said, "and another bath. Tomorrow we'll wash her. I've got to drive Franz back to the dorp now." He kissed his daughter and put her into her mother's arms.

Helen spent all the next day in the kraal sitting on a box beside the mare, listening to her munching hay and crunching mealies. Old Herman sat watching them both, smoking his pipe.

Everything the mare did was wonderful. The way she ate. The way she drank from the bucket Herman brought her. The way she rolled, kicking her legs in the air. When she'd done all this the horse came and stood beside the girl with her soft grey nose almost in her lap, while Helen stroked her face and pulled her ears.

Her father found them like that. He had come home early to wash the horse. It took five washings with soap and water to get her clean enough to satisfy Helen. Then she was dried with a wisp of hay and rubbed down with a bit of sacking. Her tail, mane, and forelock were combed with a metal comb Johnnie had picked up in the dorp, and the hairs on her heels were trimmed off with Clare's dressmaking scissors. She looked a very different animal now.

"She's lovely," Helen said, "so lovely."

"Wait till tomorrow. When she's really dry we'll brush her." Johnnie threw an old blanket over the horse and fastened it in place with a surcingle. "Bedtime, Helen," he said. "Bedtime for you both."

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Old Herman led the mare off to a shed that had been bedded down with veld grass, and Johnnie carried his daughter into the house.

Before going to work Johnnie went to look at the mare. She raised her head and neighed when she saw him. He went up to her; she rubbed her head against his chest. He gave her some crusts of bread he had brought from breakfast.

This was not the same horse, not the same horse at all. He wished Mr. Sparrow could see her now.

Life on the farm now changed its pattern. Where Helen had been the centre, the axle round which the wheel of their lives revolved, it was now the mare, because it was round the mare—that Helen had named, for some reason, Old Lucy—that Helen herself revolved. Old Lucy and old Herman, who took care of both her and Helen.

There was a regular routine. In the morning Lucy was saddled. The saddle consisted of a pillow fastened with a surcingle. Lucy also wore a head collar with a riem that Herman held with one hand while he balanced Helen with the other. In this fashion they covered the whole farm and even went beyond it. In the afternoon Helen rested and Old Lucy grazed near the homestead. In the evening Helen rode again.

Every day the mare put on condition. Every day she became more tame, more human. " More like a dog than a horse," Clare said.

" Perhaps more horses would be like dogs if they were treated like dogs," Johnnie said.

Helen didn't need Herman to hold her on any more now. She managed very well with her fingers twisted into the mare's mane. Sometimes she even managed a slow canter with Herman running in front of the horse. But they were always out of sight of the house when they tried something new. She was getting better—stronger—she could feel it.

I'm going to surprise them all one day, she thought happily. She'd never been so happy before. But perhaps you had to be unhappy before you could be happy.

Sometimes the Metz children came over to play with her and ride Old Lucy. Charmian was twelve, a year older than Helen, and Charlie was ten. They were nice children. They always brought an apple or sugar for Old Lucy. Their father brought them over in the afternoon and Helen's father drove them home when he got back from work. Helen always sat on the front seat beside him.

One day, after they had been coming for about a month, Charmian said, " Can we try to jump her, Helen? "

It seemed a great idea and the children rolled out two empty five-gallon dip drums, leaving them on their sides, and set a blue-gum lath across them. Charlie led Lucy up to the jump and told her about it.

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" Jump it, Charm," he said to his sister. " You show her how."

Charmian jumped. Then she said, " Let's see if she'll follow." She led Lucy back a few yards and ran to the jump with the mare cantering behind her. She never hesitated, and the two came over side by side.

Helen clapped her hands. "Again," she said, " do it again! "

" Give her an apple," Charlie said.

They gave Lucy half an apple and went over the jump again.

" She likes it," Charmian said. " I'm going to try riding her over." She climbed on to Lucy's back with Charlie's help. The horse seemed to like this even better.

" I'll stand them up," Charlie said. " What about that? "

" O.K.," his sister said. " We'll try it." She patted the horse's neck. The boy stood the drums up on end.

Lucy cocked her ears and popped over.

Helen, sitting on the grass with Herman behind her, was entranced. It was wonderful. It was beautiful the way Old Lucy came up to the jumps and took them clean. Like a buck; flying like a bird through the air. Her coat of alternate chestnut and white hairs shone like shot satin. Her mane and long tail flowed. Her forelock divided itself into two, falling each side of the white star on her forehead.

Beautiful, that's what it was, with the blue, cloudless sky above and the chickens scratching in the veld behind the sheds and kraals where they had set up the jumps.

After this they jumped almost every day with an audience of Clare and old Herman, Mr. Metz and Johnnie in the evening. Mrs. Metz came over sometimes too, to watch. The jumps were regular jumps now—three feet high—the gum laths resting on pegs set into poles Herman had sunk in the ground.

There was no doubt about Helen's improvement, Smitty said. It was not so much her legs. There was very little difference there. But in her general health, the brightness of her eyes, in her happiness. She was, as he had said before Old Lucy came, an outdoor girl who was pining away in the white cage of her bedroom.

That was how the conversation started. Then it came out.

" I've arranged for her to go into hospital for some tests in Johannesburg," Smitty said. " There's a man there now, an American specialist, who's interested in her case."

" Soon? " Johnnie said. " How long is he going to stay? "

" Now," Smitty said. " He's got to get back, so I'll drive her in tomorrow."

" How much will it cost? " Clare asked.

" Not too much. They're friends of mine at the nursing home."

" We'll manage," Johnnie said.

Clare turned to her husband. " I'll go with her and stay with Muriel. You can manage for a bit, can't you, Johnnie? "

" I'll manage." He knew he could manage, and the farm did not need much attention now. They couldn't plough till it rained, and the few cattle they had left could take care of themselves. All

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they needed was a dipping once a week—and he'd do that on Sunday.

Lucy was the only thing that worried Helen. This was adventure. It was change. She had never been in a big town. She said, "Lucy? She'll miss me. You'll look after her, Daddy?" Her voice was anxious.

"I'll look after her, darling."

"Talk to her, Daddy. She likes to be talked to, especially while she's eating."

What a wonderful kid she was. No thoughts about herself at all. Just her horse. But the horse had become almost a part of her—a symbol of activity.

"I'll talk to her," he said, "and the Metz kids will be over every day, I expect."

"Bed now," Clare said, and that was the way the evening ended, with Smitty smoking his pipe in silence and Johnnie thinking how lonely he would be.

And Johnnie was lonely. There were letters from Clare almost every day, but there was no Clare to come home to, and he picked the letters up at the post office in the dorp. No little girl to be carried in his arms. No talk of Old Lucy and how wonderful she was.

It was to have been a month, but it was longer and the bills were coming in. Not big bills. Smitty had been right. They were cutting things to the bone, but they were bills and they had to be met.

The cattle went. The two last boys were paid off. Only old Herman stayed on.

Johnnie was standing by the spring looking at the nests, just thinking about things, watching the beautiful black-and-yellow birds flying about, watching the green grass balls of their nests sway.

Yes, a lot of things had gone, including Old Lucy. She'd been the last thing. That was his only justification. He'd sold everything else first: his gold cuff links, his father's watch, the silver tray. And he'd not told Helen. No good worrying her.

He looked over the empty veld. Empty to him because not a head of stock on the place was his any more. He'd leased the grazing to a butcher.

It was amazing how he missed the mare. She'd been a link with them, with Helen and her mother—with the girls. Every night she'd been waiting for him when he went to see her before he went to bed. Sometimes he'd taken a walk under the stars with her following like a dog, and now she was gone. Metz had sent a boy over for her this afternoon and everything seemed empty, and more lonely than ever.

What a difference the horse had made in his life and Helen's. That was the thing that worried him. How was he going to explain it? The mare had saved Helen. He saw that—saw that now that it was too late. It was Lucy that had given her the lift, made life

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worthwhile again. In every letter she asked about Old Lucy. She'd even posted a handkerchief to give to Lucy to smell.

He'd done it. He'd given it to Lucy and she had looked into his face and whinnied, and now he'd sold her. For Helen, of course; his own things had gone first, everything practically, but how was he to explain it? If only he'd told Clare about the things he'd sold. He hadn't wanted to upset her, but she'd find out when she came back. That was what always happened. One thing led to another. One lie led to the next.

He had his supper and went to bed. The frogs were croaking. There would be rain soon. He would be able to plough if he could get the time off to do it. He had not sold the tractor, thank God. But perhaps he should have; not that it would fetch much—still . . . It took him a long time to fall asleep. He woke suddenly. He had been dreaming of Old Lucy, dreaming he heard her.

But he was awake now, and he did hear her. Neigh after neigh. Without bothering to put on a jacket or shoes, he went out. She was there. Lucy was there, standing by the fly-netted door of the stoep.

He went out and she almost tried to climb into his arms as if she was a dog, as if she was saying, " I'm home again. There has been some awful mistake, but I'm home."

She forced her head between his arm and his body. He pulled up her head and kissed her nose. I've never kissed a horse before, he thought. But Helen has kissed her a thousand times, has felt that soft mousy nose with a few prickly hairs against her own lips. In a way it was almost like kissing Helen. He took the mare for a walk. He needed a walk. Then he watered her, put her in the kraal with some hay.

Sleep came easier now. He was exhausted, but Old Lucy was home. It could not last, of course. She had been sold and paid for. The fifty pounds Metz had given him was in the post on its way to the nursing home. Still, for the moment God was in His heaven and Old Lucy was home. . .

Frank Metz's shouts woke him. It was hardly light. "Johnnie," he shouted, " she's here, I see."

Rubbing the sleep from his eyes, Johnnie got up. " She's in the kraal," he said.

" I saw her."

" What happened, Frank? I was asleep when she came. She woke me."

" I expect I woke you too."

" You did."

" Well, I had to come at once. The kids are crazy with worry."

" What happened? "

" Happened? We put her into the kraal with mealies and hay, and she seemed to be nicely settled. Then in the night the kids climbed out of their windows to look at her and found her gone. They rushed in to us yelling blue murder. Charlie was crying."

" Did you leave the gate open, Frank? "

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" Of course not. She jumped the poles—five there are, imagine it—and came straight here—straight as a crow flies."

" There are six fences between us," Johnnie said. " Barbed wire."

" I know. Imagine it. Barbed wire in the dark."

" I never heard of a horse jumping wire," Johnnie said.

" Nor have I, except in Australia. Some horses do it there. But they train them to. Hang a coat or a bag over it at first and then make it smaller and smaller."

" Can't make a mistake with wire," Johnnie said. " Catch a foot in it and it twists. I've seen kudu caught that way."

" I know. Well, that's that. I'll leave the boy I've got with me and he can bring her back. I'll stable her tonight."

Frank Metz got into his car and gave the boy his instructions. " Give him breakfast, Johnnie," he said. " I must get back to the kids. Pity you had your phone taken out."

That was another of the things. I could have phoned Clare, he thought, if we still had the phone. But that would have cost money too. He looked at Frank Metz's shiny new car disappearing down the farm road and wished he was a cheque-book farmer too. Still, Metz was a good guy. Very decent. If he hadn't been so decent it would never have happened.

He'd said, " Why don't you let me have the mare, Johnnie? I'll give her a good home. Helen can see her and ride her whenever she wants." He had lit a cigarette and said, " I'll give you fifty quid for her."

That was what had done it. Just the exact figure. Just the number. He couldn't have done it with forty quid or even sixty, though it was ten pounds more. Fifty was the nursing-home account that had just come in the mail. Fifty was the bull's-eye.

"All right," he'd said, and never had anything been less right. It was worse now. Old Lucy hung back in the riem and the boy leading her swung around and hit her with the loose end he had in his hand.

Johnnie was beside him in a flash. Lucy was looking at him. " Don't let him take me," she seemed to be saying.

" Nonsense," he said to himself, " a horse can't talk," but he knew she was saying it.

He gripped the boy's arm. " Do that again and I'll take the hide off you, and I'll call the baas when I get to town and ask him to see if there is a mark on her." He patted Lucy's quarters. She gave him another look and followed the boy slowly with her nose almost on the ground.

Nothing went right that day for Johnnie. Two tractor sales fell through. He got a puncture coming home, and old Herman met him with a long face and asked him what he should say to the little missis when she came home.

" She loved that horse, baas. They used to talk together. Ja, horses," he said, " talk like people. The little missis would talk and horse would go, ' What . . . what.' " He blew air through

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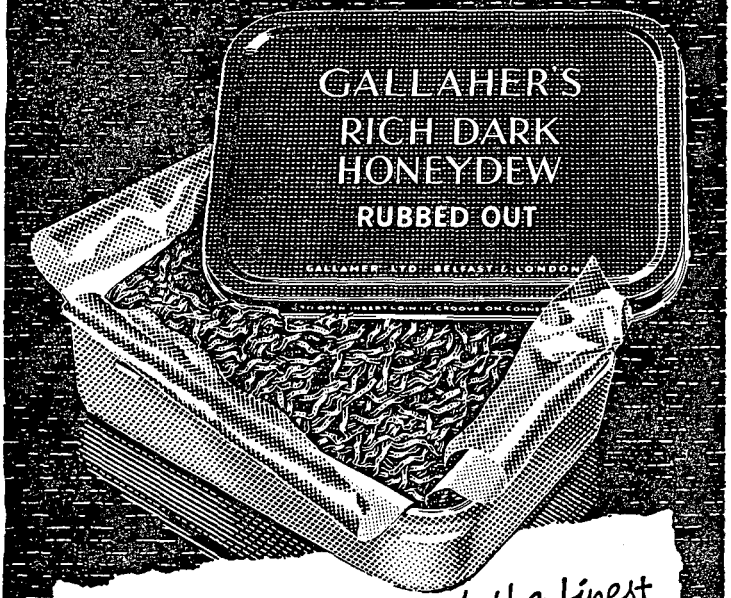

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his nose as if he was a horse. " Ja," he said, " they talked. They talked like people."

That night Johnnie hardly slept at all. He was listening for Lucy. He knew she couldn't come, that she was stabled. But she came. He heard her galloping, faintly at first, then louder and louder till the hoofbeats pulled up with a scuffing, sliding sound below his window and she neighed. Not as she had last night, but wildly, giving almost a scream, the way a horse does when it's caught in a fire. There is only one worse sound and it is the scream of a woman. Johnnie's hair stood on end. He thought, The wire. She's hurt herself.

She was standing by the screen door still neighing when he got down. He did not even pat her, but rushed to her hind legs and ran his hands over them from hocks to pasterns. No blood. Not a cut. Thank God, he thought, thank God.

She had turned to him. Her nose was in his belly. His pyjama coat was open and he felt her warm breath. She was blowing hard. It sounded almost as if she was sobbing. Her neck was wet with sweat. So were her ears as he fondled them.

He thought, Suppose she'd made a mistake and put a foot wrong. There was a bit of a moon. But suppose it had been darker. " Why didn't you come by the road? " he muttered.

She whinnied softly as if she was saying, " It's too far by road. I was in a hurry. She might be waiting for me."

I'm mad, Johnnie thought. I'm mad, thinking she said that, but he answered her all the same. He said, " I know, Lucy. It's ten miles by road and five as a crow flies." As a crow flies or a horse jumps.

That night he didn't go to bed again, but sat outside with Lucy beside him. Just before dawn she lay down as near to him as she could get. Well, this is it, he thought. Now everything is clear. He'd raise another mortgage on the farm and buy her back. I'll give Frank a hundred pounds for her and there'll be plenty over to pay for Helen too. More than enough. He wondered why he hadn't thought of it before. He had thought of it and then he'd stopped thinking because the interest on one bond was almost more than he could pay. But God was in this somehow—or Providence—something that was supernatural . . .

This time Frank drove up with the children. They were out before the car had stopped and rushed up to Lucy's legs. " She's not hurt, is she? She's not hurt? " they shouted.

" She's all right, Charlie," Johnnie said. " She's O.K."

The children were patting Lucy and kissing her. Charlie climbed on to her back.

" She wins," Metz said.

" I'll buy her back, Frank," Johnnie said.

" She wins, Johnnie. It's something you have to see to believe. She can stay here."

" I'll give you a hundred pounds for her," Johnnie said.

" No. No. But let's put that value on her. I gave you fifty

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and so she's half mine and lives here and my kids can ride her whenever they want." He held out his hand.

And that was the way that Lucy came home.

At least the lies were over now, and Johnnie could really write to Helen about Old Lucy instead of having to invent as he had yesterday. That had been a hard letter to write with Lucy just gone. *Lucy's fine. I put her to bed and went to see her before I went to sleep after dinner.* What a tissue of lies. And what could he have said tomorrow if she had not come home or if she had been hurt? How could he have gone on writing?

Johnnie now began to understand the relationship his daughter had had with the old mare. Not that Lucy was old or looked old now. Helen had given her the name before she'd had her bath and beauty treatment. She had certainly looked old when he'd bought her. But she was still in her prime really. A horse was at its best at five and stayed like that till ten or more if it was looked after.

The worst was over now—even the loneliness—because he had Old Lucy to talk to. Old Herman talked to her too. Of course they didn't really talk to the horse. They just talked and Old Lucy cocked her ears to listen and blew out of her nostrils. She liked the sound of a human voice. But he certainly hoped it didn't get around that he was bats and talking to a horse.

A fortnight later Johnnie was holding a letter from Clare with an enclosure from Helen when Smitty came into the house with a bang that loosened the screen door on its hinges. He was smiling all over his face.

"Good news, Johnnie, very good news."

"Will she walk?"

"No, no, not yet—but she will. There's no real deterioration. They've finished all the tests. They had to wait for the reports to come back from America."

"Then?"

"Now it's just a mental block. You know the way muscles work. The nerve centres send them a message, a sort of telegram, only there's no telegraph boy for Helen. But he'll come, Johnnie—he'll come!"

Smitty was looking round the room. A lot of things had gone. Johnnie's two guns—the Purdy twelve bore, and the Mannlicher. So had the big silver tray that had belonged to his father. Queen Anne it was supposed to be. If he hadn't been rooked he should have got a good price for it.

"She can come back, Johnnie. She's coming. I'm driving in to fetch them tomorrow."

He saw tears come into Johnnie's eyes. "I've missed them," he said. "Like the sun," he said. "Like days without any sun and nights without any stars. No sun, no moon, no stars. No time, even. Just emptiness and silence."

"They're good girls," Smitty said. "You're a lucky man, Johnnie. One day you'll look back on all this and see what I mean.

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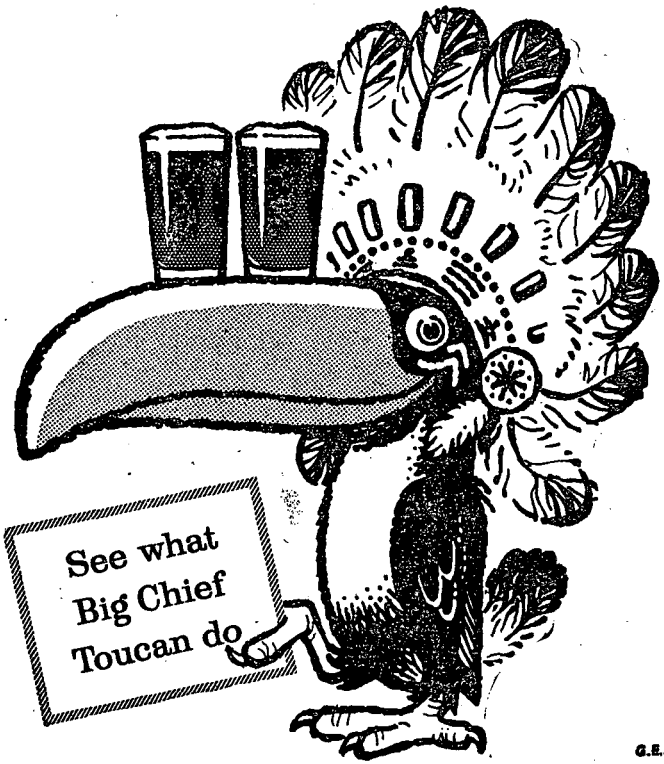

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With Helen well again and Clare happy. Then you'll know the stuff that good women are made of. The guts, my boy. Helen never folded up, never gave up. Clare never complained. Not about the drought that took everything, or Helen's illness."

"Once she got out she began to improve, Smitty. The horse was a wonderful idea."

"I'm glad you got her back."

"So you knew?"

"Everyone knew."

"It's going to be hard to tell her, Smitty."

"She'll understand. After all, you gave up everything else first."

"So you knew that too?"

"I've got eyes; and besides, do you think you can send all the stuff you have away by post without there being talk? I tell you, Johnnie, your stock's up in the dorp. You'll be mayor some day if you're not careful, Johnnie."

"Then I'll be careful." Johnnie was laughing now. "This time tomorrow they'll be home," he said. "I must go and tell Lucy."

Smitty gave him a queer look. But Johnnie didn't care. "I talk to her," he said. "She likes it."

Smitty was laughing now. "That's what they say in the dorp. 'Johnnie's talking to that horse of his now that his wife and kid are away.'"

"Everyone talks to Lucy," Johnnie said. "The Metz kids when they come to jump her, old Herman—"

"Everyone, Johnnie? And who's everyone? Some children and a pensioned-off old Kaffir that's a bit touched in the head, and you. I'll tell you something. It's a good thing to be a bit crazy like that and talk to animals. It shows a capacity for love, and that's something we're short of in the world today.

"You can't love a car or a tractor," he said. "You can keep them in good order. You can polish 'em and wash 'em, but you can't love 'em. People you can love if they're lovable, and animals. But love is a thing most people don't want. Though they talk about it all the time." He puffed on his pipe. "They want to be admired, to be envied, but not to be loved. To love and be loved is a responsibility.

"I'll go now," he said. He got up. "See you tomorrow when I bring them." He patted Johnnie's shoulder. "You're a good boy."

"Good boy be damned—we're the same age."

"Perhaps I'm a good boy, too, Johnnie. Who knows?"

Everything was ready for the return. The table was laid, the kettle was full of water to make them a cup of tea. He'd bought cakes in the dorp, and tins of peaches that Helen liked. He'd stocked up with staples—salt, pepper, ketchup, flour, sugar, tea, coffee, bacon, potatoes, butter. There was an unopened bottle of sherry on the sideboard beside the glasses. He'd put on his blue

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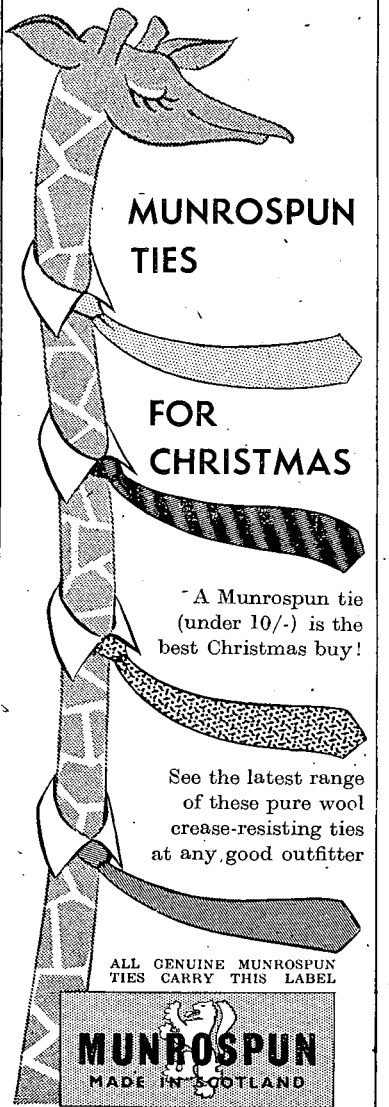
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suit. Old Herman had on the clean khaki trousers and shirt Johnnie had given him. Lucy, whose riem he held, shone in the evening light.

Yes, he'd done every thing that could be done. Even Clare's stoep plants had had their leaves washed. But he was still worried at the reception his news would get. I'll have to tell her. She'd find out anyway from the Metz kids or old Herman or someone. But how did one do a thing like this? How did one begin?

"They come, baas," old Herman shouted. "They come."

Johnnie was furious. I should have seen them first, he thought. He'd been watching the road for an hour and the minute he looked away they came, and old Herman had seen them first.

After that things were a bit blurred for everyone—a bit choky and hard to talk. They could only kiss and hug one another. To hug Helen, Johnnie had to hug Smitty, who was carrying her, and he almost kissed him in his excitement. Lucy had come into the act, and was nuzzling Helen in Smitty's arms.

Old Herman had hold of Helen's foot. He could not reach her hand and was shaking it and kissing it. "The little missis," he kept saying, "the little missis."

Clare was a good girl. If she saw anything was missing in the house, she didn't say so.

As a matter of fact, she saw that the silver tray had gone the minute she came in. She opened her mouth to speak. Then she saw the empty gunrack and she knew. She'd wondered all the time about money. Johnnie had never mentioned it. The visit had cost her nothing. She'd stayed with her sister Muriel and even used her car to go to the hospital, so she had never mentioned money in her letters.

She went into the kitchen to make tea and saw that Johnnie had left everything ready for her. Tears came into her eyes.

Smitty stayed on, of course. Helen sat on her father's lap. Old Herman hovered in the background and ate a piece of cake. Lucy, waiting outside, had a piece of cake. Then they all had sherry and Smitty drove off.

Now's the time, Johnny thought. I'll get it over.

"Helen," he said, "did you know I sold Lucy?"

She looked at him with big sad eyes. "She's back," she said.

"I had to tell you, honey. I sold everything else first. My guns, the silver tray, the cattle—"

"I must have cost a lot," Helen said.

"It was worth it. You're better."

"I'm better, Daddy. They say I'll get well. And Lucy's back."

"I had to tell you," Johnnie said.

"I knew, Daddy. Charmian wrote and told me that they had Lucy now and they loved her and would take good care of her."

"And you never wrote to me about it?"

"I think I knew why you'd done it, and then Charmian wrote again to say they didn't have her any more, that she wouldn't stay, and how they worried about her jumping those barbed-wire fences,

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but that they came over and rode her here nearly every day and that now she was half theirs."

She was quiet for a moment, then she said, "We must buy her back, Daddy. I suppose they'll let us buy her back? She's mine, Daddy—ours. How can we have half a horse, and which half, which end, is ours?"

It was scarcely light next morning when Helen called her father.

"Get me out, Daddy. Show me everything. Get me on to Old Lucy and lead me round."

On the veld beyond the almost empty milking kraals Helen saw the big jumps the Metz kids had put up. "Big jumps for Old Lucy," she said. "Fancy her being able to jump like that."

Johnnie said, "They love it and she loves it. You've forgiven me?" he asked. "I sold everything else first."

"I know," she said. She could feel his big hand on her thigh. I could not feel it once, she thought. Then she said, "And now, is she theirs or ours?"

"She's half ours, darling, and half theirs. So they have riding rights too."

"They don't hurt her, do they?" Her voice was anxious. "Her mouth, I mean. Or use a whip? They never used to, of course, but the jumps are so much bigger."

"They love her," her father said.

"But she's mine, she's mine, isn't she? One day we'll pay them off and she'll be all mine again." In her mind there was a plan forming. If Lucy can jump I'll jump her, she thought. I'll enter the show and win money. I'll tell her and she'll understand.

They went all around the farm and then it was time for breakfast and the day's work.

For a month everything went on much as it had before Helen had gone to hospital. There was no doubt about her being better. She was beginning to use her thigh muscles. She rode farther and farther every day and for longer hours. But she had an object in mind, a secret project, and one morning when her father had gone to work Helen got Herman to carry her to the kraal where the mare was munching a mixture of chaffed hay, bran, and mealies.

"Put me down," she said.

Herman set her down in the soft powdered manure that covered the kraal three feet deep.

"Now," she began a conversation with the mare Lucy, "you've got to jump me. We'll jump in the show and make money and buy you back."

The mare took her head out of the manger and nibbled at Helen's hair, spilling a mixture of chaff and mealies in it.

Herman said, "They say you can't talk to a horse, missis." He felt the time had come to stop this.

"Ja, I can, and do. Put her saddle on and lift me up."

"She hasn't finished her scoff yet, missis."

"By the time you've got it on she will have." Helen reached

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I JUMPED into the first railway compartment which seemed empty : my eyes fell on a book left on the seat opposite by a previous passenger.

I took it up absent-mindedly and ran through the first lines. Five minutes later I was reading it as eagerly as a clue to a hidden treasure. I learned that everyone's memory is capable of fantastic feats; that an ordinary person if he has taught himself to control the way in which his brain stores impressions can memorize accurately long and complicated lists of facts after reading them over only once or twice. I thought I would test the truth of the statement.

I took a timetable out of my suitcase and began reading quietly in the manner prescribed, the names of about one hundred railway stations. I observed that, after reading them over a few times, I could recite the whole list off with hardly a mistake. With a little more practice I found I had committed them so completely to memory that I could remember them in the reverse order and even pick out one station from the list and say which number it was, and what were the names of the towns before and after it.

I was astonished at the memory I had acquired and spent the rest of my journey on more and more diffi cult experiments in memory, and re flecting how this new control I wa achieving over my mind would ma terially help me to a greater succes in life. After this, I worked hard a this wonderful memory system, anc within a week I found I could recal passages from books and quot them with ease; names, addresse and business appointments wer remembered immediately; and i four months I had succeeded i learning Spanish.

If I have obtained from life measure of wealth and happiness, i is to that book I owe it, for i revealed to me the workings of m brain.

Three years ago, I had the goo fortune to meet its author, H. W Borg, and I promised him to propa gate his method, and today I an glad of this opportunity of expres sing my gratitude to him.

I can only suppose that other wish to acquire what is, after al the most valuable asset toward success in life.

Borg's address is : H. W. Borg c/o Aubanel Publishers, 14 High field Road (Rathgar), Dublin, Ire land. Apply to him for his littl book, "The Eternal Laws c Success." It is free to all who wis to develop their memory.

F. ROBERT

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out a hand and held the mare's foreleg below the knee. Lucy moved nearer to her.

"Pas op," Herman shouted. "She'll step on you."

Helen laughed. "You couldn't make her," she said, and holding the leg pulled herself under Lucy's barrel belly. "Put the saddle on, and no bridle, just the head collar."

When the bag and surcingle were on, Helen said, "Now lift me up."

Herman lifted her.

"Now lead her to the jumps."

"No!" Herman said. "What will the baas say?"

"The baas won't know."

"And if the missis falls and breaks her neck?"

"I won't. I promise."

"Ja, you promise, but what about Herman? Ja, what about old Herman if the young missis breaks her neck?"

"Put me up," she said.

Herman lifted her up.

"Now to the jumps."

He led her there.

"Take off all the bars except the bottom one. I've got to learn, you know."

Herman took off the top three poles that the Metz children had used.

"Now, Lucy," Helen said, "take it steady."

The mare turned her ears back to listen. Helen stroked her neck and pulled herself forward. "Now," she said again, and tapped Lucy's flank with her hand.

Lucy started off at a gentle canter. When she reached the jump she went over it without hesitation, drifting over it as lightly as a leaf. She went on for twenty yards or so and came to a stop.

Helen stroked her neck and pulled her ears gently. "Good girl." To Herman she said, "Put up the next bar."

She pulled Lucy round by her ear and the performance was repeated. They jumped for almost an hour. Then Helen said, "Get me down now. We'll try again this evening."

When Johnnie came home he couldn't believe his eyes. Helen was jumping Old Lucy, taking her over three-foot jumps without even a bridle. And what a seat! His heart almost stopped beating and then leapt like a bird into his throat.

The mare cantered up to the jump and popped over like a buck, like a kudu. With Helen up beyond her withers, her face almost hidden in the mare's mane, her arms around her throat. Her thighs were round Lucy's neck and her legs, out of control, wobbled like those of a sawdust doll. After clearing the jump Old Lucy slowed up and stopped. Helen turned her by pulling on her ear. She spoke to her and they jumped again. Then Helen saw her father.

"Hullo, Daddy," she said. "We're jumping."

"So I see. But it's pretty high, and are you sure it's safe?"

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"Safe?" she said. "I was safe in bed when I couldn't move. Do you want me back there?"

"No, but I still think it's high."

"We're going higher, aren't we, Lucy?" She leaned over the mare's neck.

Lucy raised her head and neighed.

"Magtig," Herman said, "baas, this is going on all day. She and the little missis talk together. Ja," he said, "the horse is tagati, bewitched, and talks like a man. Baas," he said, "I wish to give my notice. The devil is here."

"Devil," Johnnie said. "Perhaps it is God."

"If the baas says so, I will stay."

Johnnie put his arms round his daughter and carried her into the house. Old Herman and his devils! He talked to the horse himself. Herman's notice was just a trick to try to stop all this business in case Helen got hurt and he was blamed.

There were new problems now for Johnnie and Clare. Helen had the bit between her teeth. Nothing would stop her jumping, and the mare was a natural jumper. If Helen showed her a jump, she would clear it on her own. She'd jumped six foot six inches clean as a whistle that way and come back to Helen to be petted.

"She's got something in her mind, Clare. She's not the same girl since she came back," Johnnie said. "She's got some secret."

"And have we ever got a secret out of her?" Clare asked.

"It's not natural for a kid to be like that," Johnnie said.

"Well, she is like that and I'm glad in a way," Clare said. "That's what'll cure her. Her will. Her iron will."

"The kid with the iron will," Johnnie said, laughing. He was proud and upset at the same time.

Next time Smitty came over they talked to him about it. "What'll we do, Smitty?"

"Let her go on, Johnnie."

"Suppose she falls?"

"Suppose anyone falls?" Smitty said. He put his hand on Johnnie's knee. "There's something in this that's beyond us. Call it what you like. I prefer God myself. But don't interfere. She might come right any day. Just like that. And I believe she will."

But she didn't, and she just went on jumping, with her extraordinary seat, fluttering like a bird above the cushion she still rode on.

Then it came. One evening Helen announced that she was going to compete in the high jump at the Boomspruit stock show.

"No," Johnnie said, "I won't have it."

Helen played her trump card. "Then I'll go back to bed. I won't get up." They knew she had them and she knew too.

It was a sensation, that show. Helen Blackett's jumping was all anyone talked about. The cattle were forgotten, the harness horses, hacks, and blood horses that did their stuff in the ring were hardly

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looked at. Everyone was watching for the paralysed kid—they called it paralysed—it was good enough. Crippled, anyway.

It began with the first round. The high jump was set at four foot and three horses failed to clear it clean before Helen and Old Lucy came on.

A sort of gasp, a prolonged "Aaah" went up from the crowd when they saw the little girl with long hair on the roan mare. A kid and not even a proper saddle. No stirrups. No bridle. Only a headstall with a riem fastened under the chin. Her parents must be mad. The committee must be mad. It was a disgrace.

But the mare seemed to know what she was doing. The kid leaned forward and spoke to her. Her hands holding the riem were twisted into the mare's mane.

The horse cantered up to the jump and took off. The girl's long golden hair was flying out behind her as she left the horse's back. Her arms were around the mare's throat, her crippled legs dangling. But they were over . . . and safe. For an instant there was dead silence. Then there was a roar of approval and clapping.

It went on like that. Horse after horse was knocked out. At five foot six only one other horse, a chestnut gelding, a winner at some of the biggest shows, was left in the competition. He was a big hot-tempered beast with rolling eyes, and touched the bar, knocking it off its pegs at five foot seven.

Smitty and her father were standing beside Helen while she

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watched. "You all right?" Smitty said. He knew she was all right—more all right than she'd ever been. She liked the excitement and applause.

"We can do it," was all she said.

And they did. As if she knew and wanted to show off, Lucy cleared the bar with inches to spare.

Lucy got her ribbon. Helen got a cup and ten guineas' prize money. Everyone congratulated her. But all she said to her father was, "That's the beginning, Daddy."

"The beginning of what, darling?"

She didn't answer. She just patted Lucy and began to cry.

That was when Mr. Lonstein came up to them. He was a fat little man who'd made a fortune with diamonds in West Africa.

"You her father?" he said to Johnnie.

"That's right," Johnnie said.

"Magnificent," Mr. Lonstein said. "Wonderful! Wonderful! She ought to jump in Johannesburg."

Helen pulled herself together. "I want to," she said. "Lucy could jump a house."

"It can't be done," her father said.

"Why not?" Mr. Lonstein asked.

"Money," her father said, "entrance fees, expenses; it just can't be done."

"I'll do it," Mr. Lonstein said. "Let me. I'll send the horse

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up to the city in a trailer, drive you and your daughter up in my car. A pleasure," he said. "What a day it would be. What a thrill."

"It's very kind of you," her father said, "but—"

"We'll go," Helen said. "And thank you very much."

The show was not till the autumn; and a lot can happen between now and then, Johnnie thought. But nothing happened except that the rains were good and his hundred acres of mealies looked wonderful, and Mr. Lonstein came down every month to see Helen and Lucy.

At first he stayed at the Jacaranda Hotel, but after a while he stayed in the house.

They learnt a lot about him. That he was rich they knew. That he was eccentric was obvious. That he was generous, lovable, and very funny they soon found out.

"I know what worries you, Mr. Blackett," he said. "Why should a fat little Jewish financier do this? And you're right. There must always be a motive. Well, here it is. Like I told you the first day when I met you, there's the thrill of it, the fun of it. Next there is the fact that the world should see how well Lucy jumps and Helen rides and, finally, the courage." He patted Helen's head. "Brains I've got, but no courage."

After that they took him to their hearts and loved him.

At last the great day came.

Helen and old Herman who carried her pickaback were entranced by the crowds and the livestock at the fair. Many of the beef cattle, dairy cattle, sheep, goats, horses, poultry, and rabbits were new to them. Never had they seen oxen so fat or dairy cows with such udders.

There were the usual events: a musical ride by the mounted police, the cattle parades, the hacks, the hunters, the ponies, the ladies' hacks, thoroughbred stallions, a bayonet-fighting display by the Transvaal Scottish. The jumping—five-bar, stone wall, water jump, in-and-out, and the rest of them. On the third day came the high jump with forty entries. Of them all—even the old-timers—Helen remained calmest, and Lucy, as long as someone of the family was with her, was undisturbed by the noise or the crowd outside the ring.

As their numbers were called the riders went in.

A black gelding cleared the jump. A brown mare with a dark girl tipped the bar. A grey cleared it. A bay thoroughbred came next, cleared it, and almost ran away when he landed.

Helen was next. Mr. Lonstein led her out and let go. Once again there was a hush. Fancy a kid like that competing with adults . . . the horse looks all right, but—

That was when Lucy started for the jump. No saddle, no proper bridle . . . a crippled girl. How could they—? But there she was, going at it.

Old Lucy cocked her ears and slowed her canter. Helen pulled

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herself forward by the mane, climbing the mare's mane like a monkey on a stick, as Lucy dug her hoofs into the ground and shot forward.

" She's off! " someone shouted. But he was wrong. And the mare was over.

Helen jumped twice more that day and each time it was the same. She was watched with a sort of horrified silence that was followed by a roar of approval.

That night the paper had headlines:

CRIPPLED GIRL JUMPS

> Miss Helen Blackett, of Boomspruit, has no strength in her legs which are crippled, and has developed a style of jumping that brings the hearts of all who watch her into their mouths but gets her over.

Mr. Lonstein was jubilant. " Oh, the fun of it," he said, and took them all out to dinner. Helen was a heroine, but she took it calmly. There was only one thing in her mind: the prize money, a hundred guineas this time; and nothing was going to stop her.

" Then you'll be mine," she whispered to Lucy, " all mine, not the front half or the back half, but all of you... all... all... every bit."

Her mother looked at her and wondered about her. The child wasn't smiling. She wasn't proud. She just seemed preoccupied. Her mouth was a thin hard line, her little chin stuck out. Her eyes were cold. She was polite to everyone but no more.

Her dear lovable little Helen had gone. This was a determined girl. What was it she wanted? Kudos? Praise? Adulation? She didn't seem to. Her mother knew she meant to win.

What she did not know was how frightened Helen was. Only Mr. Lonstein knew, because he was so easily made afraid himself.

He'd known the first time he saw her in Boomspruit. That was what he admired so much.

This was real courage. Any fool with no brains could be brave, but she was smart enough to be afraid and strong enough to overcome her fear, a kid like that. But he did not know that what she said to herself each time she came up to a jump was, " Throw your heart over, Helen," and that in her mind she threw it up over the jump like a ball as Old Lucy took off.

In the finals there were only three entries left: a young Englishman riding a grey Irish hunter, a Johannesburg girl riding a bay mare called Kitty, and Helen. The Irish hunter failed at five foot ten inches. He cleared it but, being a chaser was careless and hit the pole with his near hind hoof. That put him out. Both the girl on the bay and Helen cleared it.

The girl said, " Funny us both being girls and riding mares."

Helen said, " Yes," but didn't think it funny.

The girl was slim and beautiful and could ride. The bay mare was beautiful. The girl's saddlery and gear were beautiful. The girl's jacket and breeches were beautiful. Her boots were beautiful.

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Her long slim thighs that gripped the beautiful saddle on the beautiful bay mare were beautiful. Helen hated her.

There was only this girl between her and the half of Lucy she did not own. She thought she could have killed her; at least she understood now why people were killed: they were too beautiful. All those actresses that were murdered in the Sunday papers.

She patted Lucy's neck.

Five feet eleven inches. It was the girl again.

Her name was listed as Georgina Haslett, but she was just *the girl* to Helen. The girl cleared it. Helen cleared it. Two men put up the pegs another notch—six foot.

" You take it," the girl said. " My girth needs fixing."

Someone shouted to the judge. He shouted back. A man ran up to explain. He put his mouth to the mike.

" Her name is Miss Helen Blackett," came over the air as if God had shouted it.

The girl, Helen thought. She's afraid. There's nothing wrong with her girth. And I am afraid. Six feet was so high. As high as Daddy. Much, much more than an inch higher than five feet eleven inches.

Lucy was cantering slowly towards the two black-and-white posts that supported the bar. The closer they got, the higher it seemed to Helen. Then her courage came back.

" It's for you, Lucy," she said.

The mare laid one ear back to listen. Then she cocked it forward and switched her tail. She seemed to think this was fun. This was real jumping. She slowed up a little as she felt Helen climbing up her neck.

" N-n-now," Helen shouted. " Now, Lucy! " and they were off. One—two great bounds that were almost leaps and they were airborne.

Helen came right up higher than Lucy's head. She could look down on her forehead and the star. She noticed the way her forelock, divided into two as usual, was blowing back. She saw the white faces of the people in the grandstand and then she slid back. They had done it. She patted Lucy and the crowd roared.

Now let her try, Helen thought. Let that girl and her damn bay mare do it. She was surprised at herself. She had never said " damn " before.

But the girl did not do it. She was afraid and the mare knew it. The bay never even came up, but struck the bar with her chest.

Everyone was around them now: her father and mother and Smitty and old Herman and Mr. Lonstein. They all went up with her like a deputation to get her cup, the cheque in an envelope, and a blue ribbon for Lucy.

She'd done it. It was over.

" You're famous," someone said.

" Fancy a kid winning the Rand Show high jump! "

But Helen hardly heard them. What she did hear was Smitty,

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who said, " I've got crutches for you, Helen. I'm sure you can use them now," and he slipped them under her arms as he helped her down from the horse. He held her till she got her balance and she found she could use them. Her left leg would support her if someone held her belt.

They stayed two more days. Her left leg could support her. The right was still weak, but she could get about on her own and had seen most of the show again. Everyone knew her and liked her. Most of them had seen her jump Old Lucy.

She was eating an ice-cream when a stableboy ran up to her. She knew him well by sight. He looked after two other jumpers.

" Missis! Missis! " he shouted. " Come quick. The man," he said. " Ja, the baas, he's trying to jump her and she won't. Then he hit her with his sjambok."

Helen looked at him wide-eyed, wiping the ice-cream from her mouth. "Jumping? Jumping who? "

" Die missis se perd," he said. " Your horse, Old Lucy. Man he struck her, and your boy is killed."

Before he had finished Helen was off, hopping towards the practice jumps like a wounded rabbit. A man trying to jump Old Lucy. Herman was dead. He had tried to stop it. The man had hit him. He'd hit Lucy.

The blood boiled in her veins. Suddenly she knew that she had never been angry in life before. Not like this. I said damn, she thought. She said it again. Damn him! Damn him! A murderer! Beating Old Lucy, and old Herman dead!

He— She increased her pace. Coming round the side of the stables she saw him: a big redheaded young man on Old Lucy's back, trying to force her over a jump that she had refused. Her mouth was bleeding from the heavy bit he had put into it, and she had a curd of froth and foam on her chest.

" I'll teach you," he said. "Ja, you damn lazy skelm." He raised his whip and brought it down on Old Lucy's quarters. She laid her ears back and showed the whites of her eyes, but did not move. The man jumped off, holding the rein in his hands, and began to thrash the mare.

Without knowing how she did it, Helen was running. She had let one crutch fall and charged the man, using the other like a bayonet. She struck the man in the side. As he turned to face her, Old Lucy pulled free and swung round to her mistress' side.

" What the hell! " the man shouted.

" My horse," Helen hissed at him. " You dared to hit my horse. And my boy." Old Herman was not dead. He hobbled towards her.

" I was just teaching her," the man said. "A horse must learn to respect a man—a woman too. Magtig, never before has a woman struck me. Never before—"

He did not finish. The crutch point took him in the throat. He went down and Helen beat at him as if he was a snake.

He got up and tried to seize her arm. Old Lucy chopped at

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him. Then with a flash of teeth and flaring nostrils she took him by the collar of his coat and shook him like a rat.

By now a crowd was round them, visitors, owners, grooms.

"Like a bloody rat," a man said. "I've heard a horse could lift a man in his teeth, but I've never seen it."

Helen was sobbing, with her arms round Old Lucy's neck. Old Herman was patting her shoulder. "Drunk," he said. "Ja, he was drunk. I tried to stop him and he hit me flat."

It was all a nightmare, a dream. It wasn't true. The mare pushed her nose into her chest. Helen pulled her ears and rubbed her poll, kneading it with her fingers. Then she looked down and saw her crutch on the ground. It had been broken in the scuffle.

What'll I do? she thought. How will I get about, and where is the other one? Then it dawned on her. She was standing. She had run. She had fought a man. She had won a hundred guineas and could buy Lucy back. I can walk, she thought, and Lucy's mine. That she had won a great competition was forgotten. The little Helen that her mother loved was back.

Helen was standing crying bitterly, her arms wound round her horse's neck, when Clare and Johnnie found her.

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★ ***The first part of "The Sands of Kalahari" by William Mulvihill appears in next month's ARGOSY***

SOLUTIONS to ATTENTION ALL SHIPPING!
on page 30

1. *Petrels, and they like stormy weather.*
2. *a. a horse that crib-bites; b. a deep-sea sailor; c. a wind-indicator.*
3. *a. North Mediterranean; b. the Andes; c. North America; d. South-east France.*
4. *Amber is fossilised resin from the Baltic coasts; ambergris a secretion from sperm-whales.*
5. *a. Margaret Mitchell; b. Kenneth Grahame; c. Richard Hughes; d. John Buchan.*
6. *Coast near Kiel, North-east Germany.*
7. *Speed of 6,080 feet, or one nautical mile, per hour.*

SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 144

Across. 1, *Cross-breeding.* 10, *Goneril.* 11, *Pattern.* 12, *Iowa.* 13, *Noted.* 14, *Blue.* 17, *Unlucky.* 18, *Stirrup.* 19, *Trained.* 22, *Spartan.* 24, *Rope.* 25, *Abbey.* 26, *Smut.* 29, *Shadows.* 30, *Tearoom.* 31, *Stone-dressers.*

Down. 2, *Renewal.* 3, *Sark.* 4, *Balcony.* 5, *Empress.* 6, *Duty.* 7, *Needler.* 8, *Agriculturist.* 9, *Once upon a time.* 15, *Scent.* 16, *Vital.* 20, *Asphalt.* 21, *Debased.* 22, *Spectre.* 23, *Tambour.* 27, *Moon.* 28, *Oaks.*

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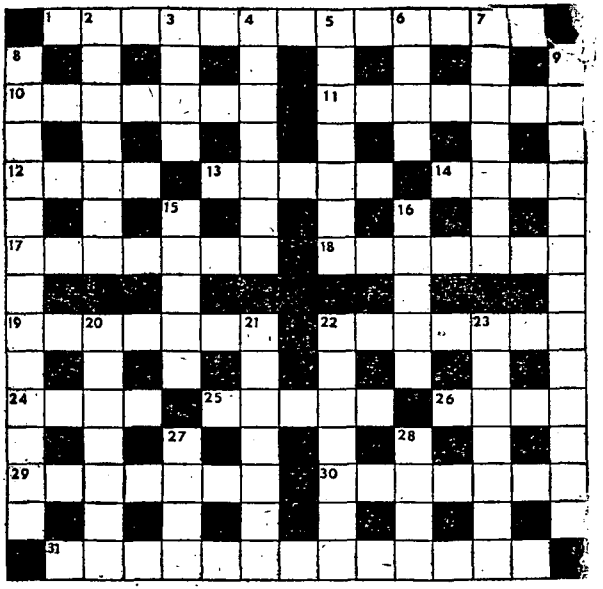
ARGOSY CROSS-WORD

★

Solution on Page 143

★



CLUES

Across

1 Bad upbringing? No, but it might produce mixed-up kids (5-8).

10 One girl's a mixed-up princess (7).

11 Model's nearly all talk (7).

12 State more than the Isle of Wight (4).

13 No young lout is celebrated (5).

14 Beard, bottle, or jacket (4).

17 This in love goes with card winnings (7).

18 "I sprang to the ——, and Joris, and he;" (Browning) (7).

19 Bridal preparedness maybe (7).

22 Hardy Nat raps back (7).

24 Part of Europe's in accord (4).

25 Sailor meets pasha in this church (5).

26 Impurity found in bismuth (4).

29 Evening ones steal across the sky (7).

30 In which Moor ate? (7).

31 Prehistoric coutu-riers? (5-8).

Down

2 It's real new, this restoration (7).

3 Home for a Dame (4).

4 Juliet's setting (7).

5 Printer's measure and papers for royal lady (7).

6 It's a must, returning from abroad (4).

7 Irritating craftsman (7).

8 Fancy farmer (13).

9 Off to a Grimm start (4, 4, 1, 4).

15 Hounds' delight doubtless (5).

16 These statistics m be important (5).

20 Sounds like snake bus stop (7).

21 Coinage or crimina might be (7).

22 Creep, little saint, it's a ghost (7).

23 Drum in church porch? (7).

27 Where Reds scored a gold! (4).

28 Fillies' trees (4).

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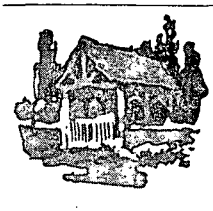

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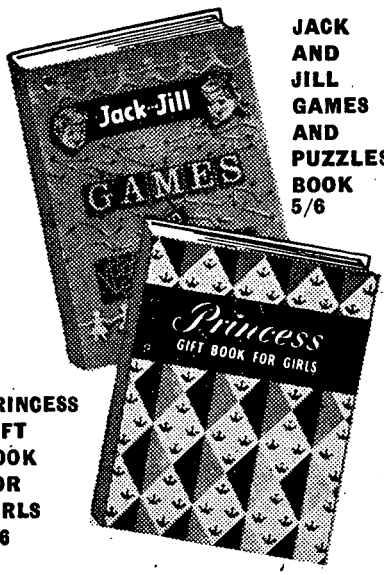

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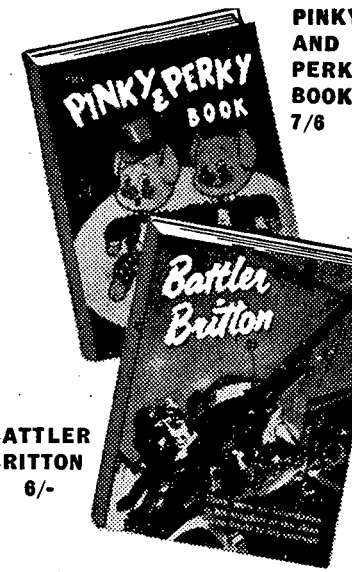

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